BODY SHOTS

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For Jimmy,
who loved *Paris, Texas,*
and Tony,
who makes movies I can't understand

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Acknowledgments

This project grew out of my interest in 1890s American culture. Perhaps because I was trained in literary studies, not film analysis, it took an inordinately long time for me to write its individual pieces, and an even longer time to assemble them into a book. Clearly this difficulty in comprehending the whole was primarily the result of critical obtuseness, my inability to grasp the larger implications of my own arguments. But I also like to think that my topic was partly to blame—the all too apparent, but maddeningly elusive, nascent motion picture body, always seeming to escape apprehension. After all these years, early cinema remains to me a strange and puzzling field of inquiry. If nothing else, I hope this book conveys some of the wonder these films still make me feel.

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Introduction

Body, Movement, Space

Judging from the title, you might assume this will be a book about boxing, one of the first and most popular subjects of moving pictures during the 1890s.[1] Or maybe you could expect a broader genre study that examines a range of athletic activities captured by early cinema—dancing, juggling, tumbling, fencing, marching, and so on. Marcel Mauss called such daily routines "body techniques," which he endeavored to classify ethnologically according to various cultural practices.[2] Such a generic approach has potential, but my interest lies elsewhere. Shifting from subject matter to theme, we might explore these early moving images of the human figure as marking and measuring foundational concepts of identity: gender, race, age, social class, nationality, and disability. In the humanities and social sciences, this is currently the central way that bodies are understood to signify. As feminists have argued, "natural" bodies and "cultural" categories such as gender and race mutually constitute one another.[3]

While I am indebted to these powerful accounts that show how the body is always already inscribed or culturally coded, this is not my explicit aim, because I am not primarily concerned with matters of identity. Therefore, in the pages that follow, at the risk of installing the white middle-class male body as a default, I present little or no discussion of African Americans eating watermelons or performing jigs, laboring blacksmiths shoeing horses, half-naked vaudeville strongmen flexing their muscles, or ladies vanishing in a magician's trick (although some consideration will be given to the gendering of space, for reasons that I hope will soon become apparent).

If not as explicit subject or theme, what is there to say about the moving body, or perhaps more accurately, what can the represented body itself say in moving images? Of course it would be naive or foolish to insist that "the body" (already an idealized generality) or any body in particular could nat-

urally signify something isolated in itself as itself, even if at times the indexical pull of cinema's photographic realism would have us believe otherwise. Film as a medium of incarnation, in other words, seems at once totally obvious and yet frustratingly difficult to articulate.

But early cinema in its first decade (1893–1904) offers an especially forceful impetus to think about the body apart from traditional categories of subject matter or personal identity (but not outside of history), precisely because over a hundred years ago, as a developing new visual technology, its own complex conventions of intelligibility were in the midst of an uneven, nonlinear, and hesitant process of emergence. How do we read a film made at the turn of the twentieth century, for example, that has no clearly demarcated characters or actors, setting, or plot? What is a body without a comprehensible story to give it some context? In the absence of meaningful distractions such as narrative, comfortably taken for granted today when we watch a movie (even one top-heavy with special effects), these early shots invite and compel us to pay attention to their more meager shapes and traces, puzzling shadows and outlines struggling to realize some sort of coherence.

Such coherence is not an inevitable teleological destiny, but merely one fulfillment among many possibilities. In a review of Val Lewton's work, Geoffrey O'Brien calls an experimental film by Joseph Cornell "a dream vision of what remains of movies after their stories have gone."[4] In the same vein, we can ask of movies produced at the turn of the twentieth century: what remains before narratives arrive? Under such seemingly diminished circumstances, early filmmaking makes manifest a rhetoric of the human form, turning the body itself into an expressive medium.[5] To achieve any sort of conceptual unity, in other words, practices of cinema during its first decade came to rely most crucially on the dynamic language of body movement—gestures, comportments, and attitudes which, taken together, remain "the content of the form," to borrow a phrase from Hayden White, lending a special kind of materiality to motion pictures.[6] While early films clearly paid attention to many other objects, such as swaying trees and steaming trains, it was primarily the human figure, moving in and through and creating space that enabled cinema to become what it became.

The phrase *body shots* may conjure up another related expectation: the prospect of embodied spectatorship that prevails in film studies these days. A shot to the body in this sense characterizes the sensation of assault or at least somatic, if not visceral, affect that cinema gives its viewers. Works by Vivian Sobchack on the phenomenology of the living body, by Laura Marks on haptic visuality, and by Mark Hansen on the corporeality of new media

experience, among many others, all offer a welcome corrective to earlier psychoanalytically oriented apparatus theories that assumed cinema spectatorship to be essentially passive—an illusory search to suture together a split subjectivity, a process in which stationary viewers in the darkened theater identified with the phantasmagoric bodies on-screen.[7]

These assumptions about the passive spectator and disappearing body have carried over into most new media scholarship. But as Mark Hansen has brilliantly argued, detailing how Gilles Deleuze misreads Henri Bergson, as digital images tend to lose physicality the human body becomes even more central as the primary means to filter information and construct meaning.[8] My own emphasis on the body complements these other studies, but with a key difference. I am less concerned about the bodies in the seats than those moving in the frame, admittedly a tricky locale to pin down, apart from the framing that we do as spectators. I am invoking here a formal distinction that apparatus theory might be quick to dismiss as naive and delusional, but one that to my mind hints at a missed opportunity for early cinema studies, beginning with Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault's highly influential notion of a "cinema of attractions" introduced in the mid-1980s.

During the past twenty years, early cinema scholarship, like film studies in general, has been centrally engaged by questions of audience and spectatorship, whether the focus be on conditions of exhibition, as in the masterful empirical and historical research of Charles Musser and Richard Abel; on collective formations of a public sphere, as in Miriam Hansen's important work; or most notably on the "cinema of attractions" model, which posits early films and filmmaking as a mode of showing that privileged immediate shock and sensation over narrative continuity and integration.[9] In this view, by now orthodox, the differences in style and content among the Lumière brothers' street scene actualities, Georges Méliès's magic trick movies, and Thomas Edison's filmed vaudeville acts are less important than what they share in common. This paradigm is powerful because it promises to account for so much, not simply explaining how this first decade of cinema differed sharply from the classic Hollywood narratives that followed but also how such "attractions" bear close affinity to avant-garde and post-Hollywood productions, including contemporary new media.

Gunning's arguments are especially compelling for challenging the ahistorical tendencies of apparatus theorists who assume cinema has some underlying universal essence. But in conceiving of early film form and its spectators as constituting a seamless circuit, at once visually assaulting and assaulted, "the cinema of attractions" thesis risks duplicating some of the pitfalls of apparatus theory. It is instructive in this respect to trace briefly

how the "attractions" argument developed in Gunning's writing from 1985 onward, from basically a means of presentation (or representation) that acted upon viewers in certain ways, to an aesthetic of spectatorship, to a crucial cultural shaper of modernity writ large. More than simply a symptom or reflection of the shock of the new, early cinema, so the argument goes, helped define modernity and bring it into being.

In this regard, Gunning's eloquent and oft-cited 1989 article "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator" remains pivotal.[10] Organized around three epigrams from Walter Benjamin, the essay begins by invoking mythic first cinema viewings that depicted terrified audiences reacting in panic to oncoming trains projected on-screen to persuasively consider such responses as signs not of a naive mimetic fallacy but rather of the visceral pleasure of sophisticated urbanites accustomed to such spectacles. These spectators, so it seems, simply felt thrilled to be thrilled. Although Gunning briefly mentions that this astonishment depended upon the illusion of motion, especially the way that still images suddenly became endowed with animation, he says little about the "variety of formal means" by which these images "rushed[ed] forth to meet their viewers." Asserting that "confrontation rules the cinema of attractions in both the form of its films and their mode of exhibition," Gunning arrives at a circular conclusion by which "the cinema of attractions fulfills the curiosity it excites," so that in the end what is exposed in these first projections is "emptiness," the "hollow center of the cinematic illusion." In his desire to move away from "text-obsessed film analysis," Gunning thus ends up evacuating the early cinema image of form or content, a position curiously akin to the apparatus theorists.

In all fairness to Gunning, in many other of his remarkable wide-ranging essays on early cinema he does look closely at various formal features of these films, especially crucial issues of time and space, but again, mostly in the service of articulating aspects of his attractions model, which he increasingly has treated ambitiously under larger cultural paradigms. For instance, in another key essay, Gunning gives his modernity argument (bolstered by citations from Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Jonathan Crary, Georg Simmel, and Walter Benjamin) a Foucauldian twist, focusing on the still camera as an instrument of social surveillance, classification, and regulation, so that "the individual body now appears simply as the realization of a limited number of measurable types. This systematization brings order and control to the chaos of circulating bodies, tamed through the circulation of information." Just as he diminishes the difference between still photography and the newer technology of cinema by downplaying the importance of plasticity

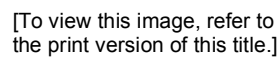

Figure 1. *A Subject for the Rogue's Gallery* (1904).

and motion, so too does Gunning tend in this view to render the human body inert, "arrested," he concludes, in the "image of guilt."[11]

While such an approach certainly makes sense for Biograph's famous (or infamous) staged single-shot film *Photographing a Female Crook* (1904) and its slighter longer companion, *A Subject for the Rogue's Gallery*, even in this case Gunning's emphasis on the camera's movement toward the criminal subject, rather than her own movement, tends to rob her of agency (see fig. 1). Yet such corporeal agency is clearly on extravagant view in her intense, weirdly animated actions of resistance, making comically grotesque faces, wildly thrashing about, and breaking down in tears. Like the camera he describes, Gunning tries to freeze and pin down the subject via a certain kind of cultural analysis, but in the end she refuses to stand still.[12] Although bodies in early cinema are sometimes immobilized, especially in the ultimate instance of death, as I discuss in the conclusion to this volume, it seems to me that, for the sake of his larger thesis about modernity, Gunning, perhaps too quickly, cuts off any extended discussion of the lived and living body, its changing emotions and emotional affects, which the movie camera, by virtue of its capacity to register motion over time (unlike the still camera), is particularly well equipped to document, as I argue in chapter 2.

When all is said and done, my close focus on the early film body seeks less to overturn these prevailing notions of attractions and modernity than to particularize them. Clearly I am not the first to do so. Feminist scholars such as Judith Mayne and Constance Balides have similarly sought to give Gunning's arguments more ideological bite by showing how women's bod-

ies in early cinema represented a specific kind of visual spectacle.[13] While I do not always follow their emphasis on sexual difference, I too have occasion in this volume to question specific implications of the attractions model: its tendency to treat visual shock as nonutilitarian, simply for its own sake (see chapter 1); its stark binary polarization between sensation and narration (see the interlude); and its version of film history (see chapter 3). But I regard these as skirmishes, not major battles. Drawing on a single kind of intellectual tradition, even one as rich as the modernity thesis, tends to yield the same sorts of answers over and over again. To suggest an alternative conceptual framework, I rely intermittently on the writing of American pragmatist philosophers and social psychologists from the turn of the twentieth century such as William James, James Mark Baldwin, and George Herbert Mead. Rarely invoked in discussions of the emergence of cinema, these contemporaneous thinkers stressed the importance of corporeal experience in their efforts (not always successful) to counter Platonic idealism and mechanistic Cartesian dualism.[14] Their theories are especially suggestive, my second chapter shows, in explaining the social genesis of personhood in ways that help illuminate how early cinema operated as a visual technology of imitation that triggered moving displays of self-consciousness.

But here too some caution is advisable, since to impose any sort of rigid theoretical paradigm on these early films risks normalizing them, making them all too familiar. As Linda Williams noted some time ago, well before the attractions model took hold, although we largely know the status of "the human body figured" in "classical narrative films and their system of 'suture,' . . . we know much less about the position of these male and female bodies in the 'prehistoric' and 'primitive' stages of the evolution of the cinema, before codes of narrative, editing, and mise-en-scène were fully established."[15] Her interpretation of the "film bodies" in the work of Eadweard Muybridge and Georges Méliès offered a promising kind of direction for such inquiry, but one perhaps prematurely foreclosed by the subsequent ascendancy of the "cinema of attractions" as a comprehensive explanatory category. While Williams herself has tended subsequently to concentrate her attention on the sensational bodily excesses of pornography, horror films, and melodramas, I propose to return to her initial formulation of the concept in relation to early cinema, looking precisely at how the kinesthetic aspects of the human form could excite viewers.

In keeping with Williams's resonant idea of the "film body" (referring at once to figures on the screen, the apparatus, and the spectator), I revisit a set of formal issues surrounding these early movies that were first seriously

addressed during the 1970s, the initial period of intense scholarly interest in the first decade of cinema.[16] By *formalism* I do not mean a dry, technical dissection of shots and scenes, but rather an approach that probes fundamental questions of representation, concerns that are intimately linked to broader historical and cultural formations.[17] Like Williams, I am intrigued by what makes these films so strange and unfamiliar, so difficult to decipher. My method is to examine a relatively small number of them, not with the intent of sweeping them into larger generic categories, but to subject them patiently one by one to sustained scrutiny in order to see how the mobile human figure, bodied and disembodied in a succession of images, occupied and organized the spaces of early cinema—what I am calling incarnation. While it might seem at times that I give an inordinate amount of attention to these brief body shots, along the lines of a detailed literary reading or text-obsessed analysis of the sort that Gunning reacted against, I think it is too easy simply to dismiss such an approach out of hand by presuming that these films individually do not merit such close hermeneutic consideration. To say that from the start the filmmaking of Edison or Auguste and Louis Lumière was too opportunistic or contingent to warrant formal examination, that it was driven strictly by a haphazard combination of commercial, industrial, and mass entertainment motives, rests on narrow and ultimately debilitating notions of intentionality.

But given the thousands and thousands of movies made between 1893 and 1904 (most of which still survive), and given the prominence of persons moving through the majority of them, what is my principle of selection? My strategy has been to pick carefully those exemplary films that foreground certain linked conceptual problems or puzzles centering on the relation between bodies and space. In my first chapter, for instance, I offer an extended thick description of a minute-long single shot of William McKinley exhibited during the fall of 1896, cinema's first novelty year and crucially also in the middle of a key presidential election. My aim is to see how this particular film of a famous politician strolling on his front lawn helps us understand the role of the new medium in the formation of a public sphere. In chapter 2, I continue to look at the behavior of human figures in public, this time common persons caught in the midst of their daily routines. Here I focus on actuality shots that dramatize how the movie camera from its inception made people acutely aware of their bodies.

Shifting, in an interlude, from acts of looking to acts of speaking, to the visualizing of sound, I discuss films that render the kinetics of vocalization—moving mouths and lips—during key moments of institutional transition: from the first introduction of peephole moving pictures (1894), to the

commercial debut of projected images (1896), to an early effort at a sort of allegorical storytelling (1901). In my final two chapters I similarly take up a group of multishot films best described as hybrids that help us appreciate the centrality of the body in the development of early cinema narration. One reason I chose to focus my final chapter on Edwin S. Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* (1902–3), for instance, rather than his better-known *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) is precisely because its uncertain experimentation with various representational possibilities makes a more interesting case study revealing the fitful starts of a wonderful new sort of apparatus.

While it may not have been Gunning's intention, one result of the "attractions" model has been to valorize a version of film history that emphasizes the gulf between incipient and prevailing modes of representation. Scholars in his wake have tended to stop thinking about the classic Hollywood linear cinema that was to come, in order to focus on its prehistory, on its roots in urban modernity, especially nineteenth-century visual spectacles such as wax museums, dioramas, and department stores. However enlightening, these readings in some cases strike me as curiously conservative in method, tracing precursor media along the lines of traditional influence studies in art history. In his magisterial study *Silent Film Sound,* for instance, Rick Altman argues that we need to examine how a new medium such as cinema initially underwent "a crisis of identity" rather than a discrete birth. But Altman threatens to undermine his own powerful insights by insisting on absolute historical continuity with the past at the expense of any novelty or difference: "Because representation is always representation of representation, the only way to understand a new technology is to grasp the methods it employs to convince its users it is no different from its predecessors."[18] Such a categorical assertion can lead to a reverse teleology that risks cutting off early cinema from its future and losing sight of those very processes of transformation. In this regard early cinema scholarship for the past two decades seems to have been caught between a rock (a predetermining past) and a hard place (an equally predetermined future), pressured from two different directions.

I hope that my focus on the body offers some way out, allowing us to consider anew the hybridity of the medium as it emerged during its first decade. Such an approach may also help restore the human form to the historical study of new media. As I have already suggested, for the most part these studies have commonly presumed that the major transmission, recording, and reproduction technologies of the nineteenth century—the telegraph, the photograph, the telephone, the phonograph, and cinema—all tended increasingly to render the body phantasmagoric and fragmentary,

even as they functioned, and continue to function, as prosthetic extensions of the senses. In one of the most important of these studies, for example, James Lastra introduces a crucial distinction between inscriptions and simulations: while simulations were based on mechanisms of the body, storage and recording devices of inscription such as the phonograph, by contrast, suggested how "speaking, singing, and music-making no longer required the presence of a human performer" (a claim I interrogate in the interlude). Turning to photography, Lastra shows how, in the popular imagination, camera images were considered "autographic," that is, "capable of inscribing themselves." In this common view, photography represented "nature copying nature, by nature's hand," as one midcentury commentator put it, yet here the citation betrays the very human presence it would deny—the trace of the "hand" that underscores (pun intended), visibly or invisibly, the very metaphor of inscription: the multitude of "graphs" naming these various technologies modeled after the corporeal act of writing.[19]

Making a similar sort of distinction between sound technologies based on sources (i.e., the vocal chords) versus those such as Edison's phonograph based on effects, Jonathan Sterne chooses to emphasize not the disembodied aspects of sound reproduction implied by inscription but rather "the tympanic mechanism—the mechanical function that lies at the heart of all sound-reproduction devices"—precisely in order to highlight "the resolutely embodied character of sound's reproducibility."[20] The sorts of claims that Sterne makes for the technology of acoustics are the ones I propose for early cinema, but less in terms of the apparatus than the images it produced.

If the body is so readily apparent in these images, why is it so difficult to grasp its primary significance? Perhaps the difficulty has less do with the perceived depersonalizing effects of these new recording and reproduction devices than with a larger conceptual puzzle—that is, the body's own tendency toward self-concealment. In a bracing reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, Drew Leder makes a provocative case for what he calls "the absent body," the body's withdrawal from conscious self-presence. For Merleau-Ponty the lived body is an object unlike any other, always inhabiting space but never fixed by it: the center of agency, reflection, and perception, in fact "that very medium whereby our world comes into being," as Leder eloquently remarks. Yet while Merleau-Ponty offers an optimistic assessment of the synthetic or unifying capacity of our corporeal schema—that is, our constantly changing three-dimensional self-image that allows us to orient and integrate ourselves in space and in relation to other objects—for Leder (a medical doctor) the body curiously and more ambiguously often remains a "null point" in terms of both motor activity

and perception (i.e., you cannot see yourself seeing). Little wonder then, Leder argues, that from Descartes onward philosophers have tended to render the mind immaterial and the body ecstatic, "directed away from itself," or taken for granted.[21]

We can approach this question of corporeal disappearance another way by returning to the emergence of cinema. Surely in any account of the prehistory of the medium, the chronophotography of Étienne-Jules Marey is decisive. Starting in the 1860s, and continuing past the turn of the century, Marey sought to analyze and freeze bodies in motion through a series of experiments using sophisticated instruments of inscription and visualization, many of them his own invention, including a number of complex optical devices that captured moving figures in a rapid succession of images. In her discussion of Marey, Mary Ann Doane argues that the scientist's true, impossible quest was not to detail movement but rather to store time, "a continuous and nonselective recording of real time" that, for Doane, puts Marey in the intellectual company of Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson despite their obvious conceptual differences, especially Bergson's skepticism about such efforts to spatialize duration.[22]

Yet as Anson Rabinbach emphasized well before Doane's analysis, Marey began his career as a medical researcher dedicated to the dynamic study of the human body as "a theater of motion" and essentially continued to think of himself as a physiologist for the rest of his life. Throughout Marey's work, Rabinbach notes, "the body was the focal point of the scientific dissolution of the space-time continuum."[23] One reason Marey's belief in the primacy of the body gets displaced into more abstract theories of time is Marey himself. As Doane, Rabinbach, and Marta Braun all have observed, Marey started by using graphical inscription methods to measure and chart inner, unseen physiological mechanisms, what Leder calls the "the recessive body," such as the beating heart, nerves, and muscles.[24] After meeting the instantaneous photographer Muybridge in the early 1880s, Marey then abandoned his graphic methods in favor of visually recording the body from the outside. But Marey soon felt that the indexical power of these photographs was distracting, that they produced too strong an illusion of reality, hence his well-known lack of enthusiasm for the Lumière brothers' cinématographe, which he saw as overly synthetic and insufficiently analytic in its lifelike reproduction of movement when it finally arrived on the scene in 1895.[25] And so in his third stage of thinking, after moving from the inner body to the outer one, Marey by 1883 decided that, if he could not change the nature of the photographic apparatus, at least he could cover the human flesh with another kind of skin (a black costume or body suit) that

would blot out extraneous detail and allow him to focus (by means of illuminated lights) only on key anatomical nodal points. In this shifting from inner viscera to outer surface to artificial exoskeleton, we can detect yet another instance of the living body progressively vanishing (but not totally) into abstraction. To analyze the human figure in motion, Marey had to stop seeing it, suggesting again the curious way that the body as a subject of investigation tends to recede from view.

In the pages that follow, I turn the study of early cinema toward questions of dynamic corporeal process and spatial composition, tracing the primacy of acting, posturing, and gesturing. Movement for Marey constituted the perfect conjoining of space and time, since "to know the movement of a body is to know the series of positions which it occupies in space during a series of successive instants." Here I must introduce another distinction, since in fact *bodies in motion* as defined by physics need not refer to sentient beings at all, let alone humans. Like Muybridge, Marey too analyzed both animal and human locomotion, but for the latter he reserved the key term *direction*—that is, the crucial sense of cognitive agency or volition that attends humans in particular.[26] Persons do not simply move at random or according to the laws of physics, but rather they move in particular ways toward specific places for given purposes. In short, human action is motivated. This simple fact remained a source of wonder for Merleau-Ponty, who observed, "The relationships between my decision and my body are, in movement, magic ones."[27] What intrigues me about so many of the films I discuss here is that precisely such motivation is at issue, up for grabs, defamiliarized. Viewed from the outside, as opposed to Merleau-Ponty's first-person perspective, figures in these early films often seem possessed, at the mercy of mysterious powerful forces, unseen but felt, beyond personal control: they are seized by fits of near hysteria (chapter 2) or insanity (chapter 3) or governed by gravity (chapter 3) or nervous electrical impulses (chapter 4). At these moments, which verge on a Cartesian dualism isolating body from mind, the subject seems more to be acted upon than to act. In this sense, volition and animation are often at odds rather than coterminous, a fact that gives these early moving images a peculiar kind of affect, suggesting how neither filmmakers nor viewers nor bodies on-screen quite knew what to make of or do with themselves. Hence their interest for me.

I trust that what may seem to be vague generalities about the body and incarnation will become more concrete in the close readings of individual films to come. But in order to give some idea of the shape of my overall argument, let me close this introduction by sketching the organizational scheme of the book, which moves from single-shot actualities filmed in the

earliest years of cinema (1896–1901) to multishot narratives made a bit later on (1902–4). In the first section, I begin by considering issues of publicity and the public sphere, looking at cinematic representations of a single exceptional figure, William McKinley, made both while he ran for national office in 1896 and after he subsequently became president. This remains perhaps the most methodically conventional chapter of the book. The chapter draws on the important scholarship of Miriam Hansen regarding publics and counterpublics, invokes newspaper accounts of first viewings as evidence, and draws on familiar American studies themes. But in the second half of this initial chapter, in the absence of any empirical data on reception, I enter more speculative grounds to consider at some length the effects of an uncanny 1901 film reenacting the execution of McKinley's assassin. From the extraordinary I turn to the ordinary in my second chapter, shifting from publicity to subjectivity in order to examine how the movie camera captured and created persons in the throes of corporeal self-consciousness. In an interlude between this first section—on embodiment and presence—and the second section, on space and narrative, I focus on early cinema's visualization of sound. Here I weave together a discussion of Edison's technology, especially the relation between his phonograph and kinetoscope, with an analysis of various enlightenment treatises on hearing and speech and a close reading of a trio of important films that all foreground the face as an acoustic source, the physical intersection between voice and image.

The final section of the book examines how the mobile human figure in early cinema materially came to make, rather than simply occupy, space. In chapter 3, I read a series of peculiarly repetitive chase movies (1903–4) as hybrids: they neither quite show nor quite tell. In dramatizing the body as a perpetual motion machine running through one changing locale after another, seemingly without end, these movies mark a profound transition between early and classic linear narrative. I again take up this question of space and repetition from a slightly different angle in chapter 4. In this sustained reading of Edwin S. Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* (1902–3), I develop the concept of "spatial causality" to emphasize this complex film's experimental stretching of cinematic space as it construed bodies moving from interiors to exteriors via windows and doors. Such experimentation compels us to imagine alternative histories and trajectories for the nascent medium. I conclude the book with a brief meditation on death, on what happens when the living body is stilled, with implications for early cinema in particular and new media more generally.

PART I

Bodies in Public

1 Looking In

McKinley at Home

> No scene, however animated and extensive, but will eventually be within reproductive power. . . . Not only our own resources but those of the entire world will be at our command. . . . Our archives will be enriched by the vitalized pictures of great national scenes, instinct with all the glowing personalities which characterized them.
>
> W. K. L. DICKSON AND ANTONIO DICKSON
> *The Life and Inventions of Thomas Alva Edison* (1894)

Let us begin by looking at a singular body, with important implications for the body politic: the president of the United States. William McKinley was the first U.S. presidential candidate to be filmed, appearing on-screen within six months after the earliest projected moving images had been commercially exhibited in the United States. Depicting McKinley campaigning near the end of the decisive 1896 election, the film inaugurated a long-standing intimacy between politics and cinema in twentieth-century America that would culminate in the presidency of the actor Ronald Reagan.[1] William McKinley was also the first U.S. president whose funeral appeared on film, after he was assassinated in spectacular public fashion at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition by a lone gunman with shadowy left-wing ties. Eagerly viewed by audiences across the nation, the 1896 cinematic debut of the presidential candidate, as well as the tremendously popular 1901 films of his state burial, offer an important means to gauge the effects of a new kind of visual technology on the shaping of public opinion. Both in terms of how McKinley is embodied in these films, and of how these films were received, I seek to show how early cinema significantly altered Americans' understanding of the relation between public and private space—a question, if not a confusion, that clearly continues to plague the office of the president today, thanks largely to the intervention of mass media: television, video, the Internet, and snap opinion polls.

I

Working backward from Clinton, Reagan, and JFK to Franklin D. Roosevelt and his fireside chats, scholars of mass communications often end up con-

ferring the title of "first media president" on Theodore Roosevelt by virtue of TR's self-conscious public management of his manly physique and equally charming personality. Early in the century, Roosevelt dynamically courted the press, encouraged cartoons and caricatures, and mugged for the cameras, both moving and still.[2] Yet the prior claim of McKinley on film offers perhaps a more intriguing case, in that the powerful mass media effects he occasioned had less to do with charismatic presence than the cinematic and cultural forces of production that served to render him incarnate. While there are certainly other ways to examine the relation between cinema and the public sphere at the turn of the twentieth century, these moving images of McKinley offer a useful focus, especially since the historical period they frame, 1896 to 1901, corresponds closely to crucial changes in the emerging medium of film and to key transformations in American politics.

It is important to realize that early cinema was a profoundly intermedial mode that emerged as a new sort of visual representation, one that drew heavily and conservatively on a wide range of established nineteenth-century cultural forms such as still photography, vaudeville routines, staged amusements and spectacles, popular magazine illustrations, and comic strips. We therefore must resist the teleological temptation to regard cinema strictly as a technological innovation carrying its own self-evident and self-contained meanings for audiences then and now. Film theorists during the 1970s frequently proposed psychoanalytically inflected accounts of "the cinematic apparatus" that tended to assume a single, unitary kind of movie spectatorship.[3] Yet despite cinema's apparent appeal to the self-sufficient eye, viewers at the turn of the twentieth century had to learn how to read the moving images projected before them in relation to what they already knew and understood.

Early Cinema and the News

In the case of the McKinley films, audiences' prior cultural knowledge centered on newspapers and the news as a medium of mass communication. Film historian Charles Musser has emphasized how early cinema often functioned as a "visual newspaper" offering glimpses of the kinds of stories, events, and people that readers found in their daily newspapers.[4] According to Musser, before the advent of fictional story films in 1903–4, the majority of films depicted "documentary-like subjects" ranging from simple everyday actualities that featured motion in the very early novelty years of cinema (feeding doves, crashing waves, and speeding trains) to historical events and personages such as Pope Leo XIII and McKinley.[5] Beyond serv-

ing as a cultural point of reference for these early films, newspapers served more specifically on occasion as shooting scripts, allowing filmmakers like Siegmund Lubin to reproduce famous boxing matches, for example, by closely following the detailed blow-by-blow "body shot" accounts in the newspapers.[6]

However useful as a starting point, the phrase *visual newspaper* requires far greater historical contextualizing and more precise attention to the differences between seeing bodies on-screen and reading about them in print—differences that can help us more carefully articulate conceptions of the public sphere. First, at the turn of the twentieth century virtually all newspapers relied on woodcut or steel line-engraved illustrations rather than photographs, so that "the motion picture news film provided a predominantly photographic kind of news coverage long before most newspapers and magazines of the period began to do so."[7] Early cinema thus gave newsworthy figures the power and immediacy of a photographic realism that could not be matched by print. Second, as a print medium, newspapers depended on physical transportation for their daily circulation, which therefore tended to be restricted to a single region, usually a city.

In this regard it is instructive to briefly consider for comparison the telegraph, an antebellum electronic technology that, as James Carey has demonstrated, "freed communications from the constraints of geography" by "allow[ing] symbols to move independently of and faster than transportation."[8] Without falling prey to a technological determinism, we nevertheless can see how this distinction between telegraph and newsprint gives greater specificity to the concept of a national public sphere. As Harold Innes has suggested, "The telegraph emphasized the importance of news with the result that the newspaper was unable to meet the demands for a national medium."[9] Meditating on this new communications technology, Henry Adams in his autobiography chose to mark the moment in May 1844 when "the old universe was thrown into the ashheap and a new one created" by the opening of a railroad line, by the introduction of Cunard steamers, and most important, by "the telegraphic messages which carried from Baltimore to Washington the news that Henry Clay and James K. Polk were nominated for the Presidency."[10]

Like telegraph transmissions, the screening of McKinley films also could give citizens the experience of instantaneous news without being tied to the material medium of newspapers.[11] But unlike the telegraph, the news of the cinema, a potential new national medium, was made up of moving images. When we turn from transmission to reception, we begin to see how the reading of images, rather than print, could transform perceptions of public

and private. Drawing on Jürgen Habermas, Michael Warner has shown how, in the colonies and the early republic, print culture crucially built and sustained a public constituted by impersonal, abstract citizens: writers and readers motivated by disinterested civic virtue.[12] With the introduction of the penny press in the 1830s; a growing emphasis on lurid stories detailing crime, violence, and sex; the attenuation of the editorial page; and the increasing blurring of the boundary between information and entertainment, American newspapers by the end of the nineteenth century were primarily serving other purposes more in line with the self-interest of a free market mass democracy.[13]

By the 1920s, Walter Lippmann and other cultural critics would openly castigate the press for fostering a "phantom public" in which Americans found themselves increasingly privatized and impotent, cut off from the political and social processes that most affected their lives.[14] While this thumbnail historical sketch is certainly open to refinement, its broad outlines remain convincing. One thinks, for instance, of how Theodore Dreiser in his novel *Sister Carrie* (1900) depicts George Hurstwood's increasingly desperate, lonely, and self-absorbed newspaper reading, which serves to convey, and to protect him against, the ravages of New York, providing a simulacrum of the city more "real" than Hurstwood's own firsthand experience. Consider, too, how American paintings representing newspapers change during the century, from antebellum genre paintings rendering well-defined social groups reading the news together, to William Harnett's 1880s trompe l'oeil still lifes of folded newspapers, which offer the eye only "disembodied news, as free of ideas or events as . . . of readers."[15]

Cinematic news seemed to allow for a very different kind of reception than isolated newspaper reading, in that the McKinley films and others were exhibited in front of noisy crowds of spectators who were encouraged to give voice collectively to their responses and to interact with each other. Until the arrival of storefront nickelodeon movie houses around 1906, these brief films were shown in vaudeville houses in between live stage acts. Yet audience reaction is only half the story, since I am equally interested in examining how public and private dichotomies are negotiated on the screen as well as in the vaudeville house. In discussing these early films, I tie together my twin concerns—representation and reception—by way of the pervasive incorporated figure of the politician "at home," which runs throughout my argument. Referring at once to the domestic and the national sphere, this key trope helps us to appreciate the formal composition of the films as well as the composition of their audiences. Examining the implications of "at home" for both viewers and viewed also compels us to link representation

and reception to broader cultural transformations taking place in the United States around the turn of the twentieth century. Given the explicit political content of the McKinley films, particularly the fact that his debut as a presidential candidate roughly coincides with the debut of cinematic exhibition, it makes sense to look at the 1896 presidential campaign in some detail.

The Front Porch Campaign

Republican candidate McKinley's successful 1896 presidential contest against Democrat William Jennings Bryan marks a pivotal moment in modern American politics for a variety of reasons. The contest raised important issues of some consequence, particularly the Republican business-oriented embrace of the gold standard versus Bryan's free silver stance, as well as the absorption of the more radical Populist movement into the Democratic Party. But perhaps more important than the issues themselves was the fact that the 1896 election signaled a break in the way presidential campaigns were run. On the Democratic side, Bryan displayed youth, vigor, and an open desire to court the American people for the presidency against a political tradition that favored experience, age, and reticence. Democrats were banking on Bryan's personal presence, especially his eloquence and charisma, as a public politician who tirelessly stumped across the country giving hundreds of campaign speeches in front of large crowds of sympathetic listeners.[16]

The Republicans opted for a different campaign strategy. Under the watchful eye of party boss Mark Hanna, the party raised enormous sums of money, far greater than in any previous presidential campaign, by systematically soliciting major corporations in the East and Midwest.[17] The Republicans spent their money on numerous flag-waving parades and thousands of pamphlets, posters, and buttons, while McKinley himself mainly stayed put in Canton, Ohio. As Theodore Roosevelt famously remarked of Hanna, "He has advertised McKinley as if he were a patent medicine."[18] At home, the candidate cordially greeted dozens of delegations on a daily basis, delivering carefully crafted short speeches (sound bites, in effect) to selected groups of supporters who had been brought in via train at reduced rates courtesy of the Republican-leaning railroads.

This orchestrated "front porch" campaign allowed Hanna to control access to the newspapers, whose reporters were invited to come to Canton to interview McKinley and cover the campaign from the relative comfort of a small town—a setting laden with nostalgic associations invoking simpler times and family values. Rather than have the candidate reach out to the press as Bryan sought to do, Hanna invited the press to come to the candi-

date. Maximizing his party's fund-raising power, Hanna sought to rationalize and standardize political campaigning (along the lines of emerging national brand name advertising) by first localizing the candidate and then disseminating his message via national networks of distribution. As Harold Innes has noted, Hanna in effect managed the Republican newspapers as if they were a trust, mobilizing them into a unified front and giving them a single story in common to counteract the regional, local inclinations of each paper.[19] If the 1896 campaign is noteworthy for being the first national election in which the presidential candidate himself *was* the entire message for each party,[20] then it is doubly noteworthy that the victory went to the candidate who remained at home, physically removed from the campaign trail, a reticent body rather than an aggressively virile one.

Yet to contrast an absent shadow of the Republican Party against a fully manifest Democratic candidate is somewhat misleading. For one thing, the majority of American citizens directly encountered neither McKinley nor Bryan in the flesh; rather, they primarily negotiated them via newspaper print. Bryan's self-consciousness about the press, in fact, occasioned his first and worst major speech on August 12, a droning two-hour acceptance address at Madison Square Garden that according to Bryan was calculated "to reach the hundreds of thousands who would read it [the speech] in print" at the expense of a few thousand bored audience members.[21] Bryan believed that how he would be read was more important than how he was heard. In his subsequent campaign stops, over six hundred all told, Bryan strove mightily to bridge this gap between newsprint and personal presence, directly reaching approximately 5 million listeners with his golden oratory, a remarkably high percentage of the 6.4 million men who voted for Bryan in November.[22]

But Bryan was not the only candidate who managed to touch citizens in such massive numbers. Given the astonishing daily procession of delegations brought in by the railroads to meet McKinley—one historian estimates 750,000 people, or 13 percent of the total votes cast for him[23]—empirical data is less crucial here than the fundamentally different ways each of these candidates was represented and represented himself. In the case of Bryan, traditional rhetorical context was everything. His acts of speaking emerged from deeply held personal convictions (as even the Republican press granted), intended to touch the convictions of his listeners. Any news that Bryan made was made by virtue of the public directly before him, while the press conveyed the style and content of his speech.

Confining their candidate to his porch but also keeping him well in front of the press, the Republicans by contrast tended to blur the traditional dis-

tinctions between private and public, between corporeal presence and media representation. Only by being absent from the campaign trail could McKinley be at once at home and before the nation. Hanna's strategy thus paved the way for a new style of modern presidential campaigning that more and more has depended on the power of abstracted images produced by "pseudo-events," to use Daniel Boorstin's term: images most forcefully, immediately, and efficiently disseminated by film technology.[24]

McKinley's 1896 Republican campaign was obviously not the first presidential election to rely heavily on patriotic slogans, symbolism, and imagery to prepackage its news. But in terms of economies of scale, it dwarfed all previous efforts and suggested how the media in particular could be enlisted to help make winning less a matter of substance accumulated over space and time (the whistle-stop campaign speeches of Bryan) than synchronic national perception that tended to erase traditional notions of time and space (ceaseless reiterations of McKinley at home). While it would be overstating the case to claim that, at this early stage, cinema was comparable to print in disseminating the candidate, the McKinley movie is clearly of a piece with Hanna's front porch logic.[25]

Cinema and politics in this case were brought together by shared business concerns. The filming of McKinley was most probably arranged by McKinley's own younger brother, Abner, who in late 1895 or early 1896 had become a shareholder in the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company.[26] This newly formed corporation would become by the end of the century the chief rival to Edison Manufacturing Company's own kinetograph division. An integral member of his brother's campaign team and yet something of a skeleton in William's closet, Abner had previously engaged in a variety of dubious entrepreneurial enterprises, including selling bogus railroad bonds and promoting a scheme to make artificial rubber. As with the 1896 Republican campaign as a whole, Abner's instrumental role as a go-between, working for both Biograph and the Republican Party, suggests the new technology's growing contribution to converging business, media, and political interests.[27]

McKinley was filmed at home by Biograph's cofounder (and former Edison collaborator), W. K. L. Dickson, and the cameraman Billy Bitzer in the middle of September 1896.[28] Titled *McKinley at Home—Canton—O* (see fig. 2), the film opens with a mid-to-long frontal shot of the candidate and an aide—presumably his personal secretary George Cortelyou—standing by his renowned front porch, which clearly serves as a visual reminder of his party's chief election strategy. As in most pre-1900 cinema, the camera is fixed and the actors look directly into the lens, fully aware that they

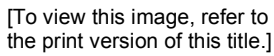

Figure 2. *McKinley at Home* (1896).

are being filmed. The two men slowly walk toward the camera, McKinley pauses midway on his front lawn, dons his hat and then his glasses to read a telegram presumably informing him of the progress of his campaign. After briefly conferring with his secretary, the candidate removes his hat, wipes his brow (the day must have been hot), looks at the camera again, and then continues to walk with his associate toward the camera and out of the right front corner of the frame. From start to finish, the carefully controlled management of McKinley's body movements (emblematic of his entire campaign) indicates a well-rehearsed, well-timed piece of filming. Less than a minute long, it depicts at its center the presidential candidate's act of news reading.

Reception and the Public Sphere

The significance of McKinley's scene of news reading becomes clearer once we turn from the film's content and its formal properties to consider the conditions of its initial reception. Accustomed to a century's worth of patriotic blockbusters depicting presidential power, such as *Air Force One*, we may find it hard to appreciate how viewers thrilled to *McKinley at Home*. The film was shown as part of the Biograph company's New York debut at Hammerstein's Olympia vaudeville theater on the night of October 12, roughly six months after Edison had introduced his own version of pro-

jected moving images in April. Given the great success of Edison's vitascope, the newspapers were more than ready to greet another new technological novelty that promised to eclipse its rival. Here we see early cinema not simply drawing on newspapers for its source material but actively working with the press, long before Hollywood mythmaking, to generate interest and excitement about film: to turn the screening into a newsworthy event in its own right. As a result, the October New York Biograph debut has produced one of the richest and most detailed records of early cinema reception that we have, as newspaper after newspaper, virtually all sympathetic to the Republican cause, weighed in to describe the brilliance and import of the event. These accounts provide a rare opportunity, for such detailed newspaper descriptions would quickly disappear, once cinema's novelty wore off and before film reviewing was institutionalized, around 1912, as a regular feature of the press.

As was customary with such media events of the era, the New York newspapers were treated to an advanced showing of Edison's technological rival, thereby encouraging the press to make the news as much as report it. An article in the Republican *New York Mail and Express* published on the twelfth (before the public screening), for example, opens with this provocative prediction: "Major William McKinley will appear tonight in New York before a great throng of people, which will include members of the Republican National Committee. . . . Major McKinley will not make a speech. . . . The distinguished statesman will make his appearance, apparently on the lawn of his house in Canton, full life size, and in action so perfectly natural, that only the preinformed will know that they are looking upon shadow and not upon substance." The article then goes on to ponder the phenomenology of the images themselves: "The picture thus shown is not flat—in fact it can not be distinguished as a picture at all." It concludes: "There is no clicking noise to disturb the illusion, and prosaic indeed is the mind that can look upon the rapidly shifting scenes and believe it to be unreal. Major McKinley is likely to get an ovation to-night when he advances to the footlights."[29]

This important account raises three interrelated issues that require careful analysis. First, the article introduces the problem of the candidate's physical presence—will he "appear tonight in New York," or "on the lawn of his house in Canton"?—a crucial spatial dislocation that the reporter finesses in the end by merging his steps on the lawn toward the camera with his "advanc[ing] to the footlights" toward the Hammerstein audience. Second, the role of the theater audience is explicitly acknowledged from the start ("a great throng of people"), so that the matter of the film's active reception ("ovation") by a very partisan group of Republican dignitaries is in effect

already built into the film itself. Finally, what is the status of McKinley's body in the moving image? On the one hand, the reporter opens and closes his account by pretending that McKinley's appearance carries the force of reality, yet he undermines his assertion by cautioning against naive mimesis, insisting that "only the preinformed" will properly not mistake shadow for substance. But such preinformation is precisely the purpose of this article itself, as if newspaper readers actively needed coaching about how to read the film to be screened that very night. Similarly, the reporter can celebrate the verisimilitude of the images only by a convoluted, inverse logic that downgrades a "prosaic" mind (as in readers of printed prose?) for believing such scenes to be "unreal." The reporter thus admits that such unreality, not reality, constitutes the baseline response to films. To grasp such representations as "real" seems to require a certain imaginative investment on the viewer's part.

In the days and weeks following the New York debut of the Biograph (the machine and the company), these conceptual perplexities cropped up in various other newspaper accounts that struggled to find terms to describe the novelty of watching cinema. In the *New York Mail and Express*'s account published the very next day (and perhaps penned by the same reporter), McKinley is described as appearing "in the flesh." Yet the phrase is itself set off in quotation marks, thereby acknowledging the cliché as a mere figure of speech. The article ends by playfully remarking that, just as the candidate appeared to be stepping down in the audience's midst, "came the edge of the curtain and he vanished round the corner." Here "corner" simultaneously stands for both the edge of the stage (marked by the proscenium arch) and the frame of the moving picture, enabling the writer to fuse two very different ontological planes. The newspaper reporter's appreciation of spectacle—in the theater, in politics, on the screen—thus helps to negotiate the difference between image and corporeal person.

What's striking in reading through these early accounts of cinematic reception, in fact, is the degree to which the moving images of McKinley and others gain their force and immediacy by virtue of their disembodiment, their potential to vanish suddenly, rather than their pretended embodiment. Herein lies the particular significance of the McKinley film's title, *McKinley at Home*. As I remarked earlier, the initial newspaper account of the movie raises the problem of the candidate's location: is he here in New York or in Canton? But given the disembodied immediacy of the moving image, McKinley can occupy both spaces at once, so that "home" comes to stand for the place of reception as well as the image's presumed geographical referent. The vaudeville house turns into home. By choosing to film their candidate

in an intimate domestic setting perfectly in keeping with their campaign strategy, and then continuously disseminating this image, the Republicans, in conjunction with the Biograph Company and its exhibitors, helped to redefine traditional public/private dichotomies. Moving from his house across his lawn to greet his audience, McKinley negotiates the space between home and country, with the lawn functioning as an interface between the two. The candidate's stroll thus serves to domesticate public spectacle by bringing national politics to everyone's collective front porch.

If we look again closely, the film gives us another, more poignant evocation of the domestic. Well in the background, as McKinley and his aide Cortelyou cross the lawn, a third person sits on the front porch in a rocking chair. It is difficult to tell, even on repeated viewings (a common exhibition practice in 1896), whether this shadowy figure is a man or a woman. But contemporaneous audiences perceptive enough to discern this rocking figure would undoubtedly have been reminded of McKinley's wife, Ida, a frail invalid who suffered from chronic depression and epileptic seizures dating from the tragic deaths of their two young daughters in the 1870s. During the presidential campaign, Hanna and the Republican Party sought to turn a potential liability into an asset by publicizing the selfless devotion of husband to wife, who became the first prospective first lady in U.S. history to warrant her own campaign biography. McKinley's steadfast refusal to abandon his sickly companion for the sake of political electioneering on the road reinforced the logic of the front porch as an intimate, ideal space shared by loving spouses whose mutual tenderness was described by the press as an "exceptional domestic relationship." *McKinley at Home* thus visually conjures up and culminates a long-standing, powerful tradition linking sentimentality and domesticity.[30]

In addition to its capacity to dislocate space, the film manages to dislocate time as well, projecting the candidate in perpetual present tense in order to keep his news fresh and up to date. As I have suggested, the shot thematizes the centrality of news by focusing on McKinley being handed a slip of paper. But what is he supposed to be reading? According to Billy Bitzer, McKinley's reading was intended to reenact the moment he received notification of his party's convention nomination, an event that took place in the summer, some months before the actual filming in September.[31] But audiences who first saw the movie in October assumed McKinley was receiving "a hopeful message from New York headquarters" describing his campaign's progress,[32] and those who subsequently saw the film in November after the election thought he was reading a telegram announcing his presidential victory. Like Harnett's still life paintings, the effect was to create

news with no content, or whose content varied according to the moment of its screening, to be filled in each time by those particular cinema viewers "at home" who occupy the here and now of the vaudeville house. In this way the telegraphed news depicted in the film becomes one with the exciting news of the film—the news of McKinley's campaign as well as the news of the Biograph debut. And by deliberately incorporating into its drama a prior medium of mass communications, the telegram (recall Adams's comment about Clay and Polk), the film self-consciously signals its own power to deliver electrifying messages across time and space.

Here it is useful to consider the sequence in which the McKinley clip and other short films were originally shown to the Hammerstein audience. As Charles Musser has demonstrated, exhibitors during this initial phase of film screening exerted enormous control by virtue of the way they ordered their presentations.[33] The October 12 Biograph program began with a film titled *Stable on Fire,* followed by *Niagara Upper Rapids,* scenes from stage adaptations of the novel *Trilby* and the short story "Rip Van Winkle," *Hard Wash* (a black woman washing her baby), another shot of Niagara Falls, followed by *Empire State Express* (a locomotive running toward the camera), then a McKinley parade, and finally, *McKinley at Home.*[34] The biggest hits of the show were clearly this final shot of McKinley and the clip of the onrushing train; it is interesting to note how several newspaper accounts in fact pair the two films,[35] implicitly comparing the thrill of seeing a locomotive "steaming toward you—right dead at you at full speed"[36] with the thrill of seeing the Republican candidate walk deliberately toward the camera and viewer. As one paper put it, these images provoked a "needless excitement":[37] sensation that is all the more powerful for being temporary and for not seeming to carry any practical consequences.

The excitement produced by the train and the analogous excitement generated by the Republican candidate thus had less to do with verisimilitude than the reality effects such cinematic images could trigger. Already accustomed to seeing a variety of dazzling spectacles in numerous other forms of popular culture—Coney Island stagings and restagings of fires and other disasters, fake train wrecks, death-defying stunts, and lurid waxworks tableaux depicting crimes and criminals in action—these modern viewers were unlikely to duck their heads in the naive fear that they would actually be run over by the image of a moving train.[38] As I have indicated, this myth of the power of early cinema (especially persistent in regard to hysterical women spectators fainting in dread) was partly manufactured by the newspapers themselves in order to encourage the public to indulge in a viscerally thrilling, mock pretense of emotion.

Such visual shock and sensation remains at the heart of the most important theory of early cinema currently available, Tom Gunning's "cinema of attractions" model. Challenging teleological schemes of film history, Gunning demonstrates how early cinema organized time and space quite differently than classic Hollywood narrative films subsequently did, and therefore produced a significantly different sort of spectatorship. Instead of being absorbed into the narratives unfolding before them—that is, identifying with the figures on the screen as we do today—early cinema viewers were directly assaulted by a number of visually stimulating and often startling displays (magical, scientific, theatrical, or otherwise) designed to provoke immediate responses of wonder, puzzlement, or joy. As my introduction describes, in subsequent articles Gunning and other early film scholars have sought, by way of spectators' astonishment, to link these cinematic "attractions" to broader cultural patterns of modernity as analyzed by Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and other critical theorists of the Frankfurt school.[39]

While the attractions argument offers us crucial ways to distinguish early films from classic Hollywood narratives, this more recent focus on demonstrating how cinema was, and still is, one key symptom of modernity threatens to lapse into the same kind of ahistoricism that Benjamin identified as a feature of modernity itself. In trying to get such a comprehensive picture of what early cinema was, we lose sight of what it did and how it worked in particular instances. As the pairing of McKinley at home with the speeding train suggests, visual sensation was not produced simply for sensation's sake. Such stimulation was in fact instrumental, designed in this specific case to move a select and partisan audience to show their support for their party's presidential candidate. The political consequences of this early screening take on even greater import when we recall how the press, virtually all Republican-leaning, consorted with Biograph and its new technology to generate excitement about the event as well as the national election.

Over and over again in these newspaper accounts, reporters emphasize the intensity of the crowd's reaction to the candidate's stroll on his lawn:

> "The house was crowded and the picture of McKinley set the audience wild. Seldom is such a demonstration seen in a theatre."
>
> "The audience caught sight of the next President . . . [and] pandemonium broke loose."
>
> "The audience went fairly frantic over pictures thrown on a screen."
>
> "When . . . Major McKinley stepped onto his front lawn, the whole house went wild."

> "The concluding scene of Major McKinley walking across the lawn to meet the visitors, was vociferously greeted."
>
> "The scene when McKinley strolled across the lawn of his house evoked infectious enthusiasm."
>
> "He was received with tremendous cheering, and there were loud calls for a speech."
>
> "McKinley . . . seemed to smile in appreciation of the roar that greeted his appearance."[40]

Such journalistic hyperbole clearly participates in the very sort of wild sensationalism that it aims to document, seeking to draw energy and immediacy from the new medium. Yet these newspaper accounts also highlight the collective and vocal nature of the audience's response. In this regard the final two quotations cited above are particularly revealing. Assuming some sort of interactive relation between moving image and viewers, the crowd adopts the standard patriotic fervor that would greet a politician's appearance, but in a context where such charismatic interplay between speaker and audience is obviously impossible. Yet precisely because McKinley is disembodied, mute, and yet immediately in front of them, the audience is enabled to speak *for* and *as* him, in effect take him on, such as the woman at Koster & Bial's vaudeville house who "insisted upon making a speech" upon viewing the film a day after McKinley's election on November 3.[41]

Screened over and over again in a variety of cities (New York, Baltimore, New Haven, Chicago, and St. Louis) both before and after McKinley's victory, this short film bears directly on the question of a national public sphere, although it would be difficult to show exactly how the film affected the outcome of the election itself. Many historians of communications have tended to take a dim view of the mass media, emphasizing how such totalizing technologies attenuate public discourse by rendering citizens increasingly passive. Harold Innes offers the most axiomatic argument: "Technological advance in communication implies a narrowing of the range from which material is distributed and a widening of the range of reception, so that large numbers receive, but are unable to make any direct response. Those on the receiving end of material from a mechanized central system are precluded from participation in healthy, vigorous, and vital discussion. Instability of public opinion which follows the introduction of new inventions in communication designed to reach large numbers of people is exploited by those in control of the inventions."[42] Following in the wake of Theodor Adorno and other Frankfurt school theorists, Habermas has put the

case more bluntly: "The world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only."[43]

The intervention of the New York press who strove to tell viewers how and what to think about cinema, the sequencing of film clips, Biograph's close ties to high-ranking Republicans, and the manipulation of space and time (McKinley at home here and now), all seem to support this top-down model of how modern media functions to exercise control in a mass democracy. Yet to the extent that the Biograph audience was encouraged to participate in the event, give voice to their opinions in the absence of the candidate himself, and therefore make news themselves, such a top-down analysis of monolithic political control falls short by failing to allow for any interactive dynamics between viewer and viewed or among viewers themselves. What do we make of the fact, for instance, reported in several newspapers, that scattered supporters of Democratic candidate Bryan booed at McKinley's screen appearance and were in turn hissed down by the vocal Republican faithful?

From a Habermasian perspective, the impact of such audience interaction would be negligible at best and illusory at worst, since his notion of the public sphere assumes that citizens work to exert influence on state power via channels of rational discourse and sustained debate. Yet there are other ways to construe the public sphere, or multiple publics' spheres, that attend more closely to "the micro-politics of daily life."[44] Drawing on the work of the second-generation Frankfurt school theorists Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, Miriam Hansen makes a strong case for the idea that early cinema exhibition from 1896 to around 1910 enabled a "counter" or "alternative" public sphere: a space where socially marginalized groups of spectators such as women and workers might collectively in dialogue become part of a "social horizon of experience."[45] Hansen's argument is especially compelling when early cinema spectatorship is compared to the increasingly privatized reading of newsprint during the nineteenth century, on the one hand, and to subsequent changes in movie viewing, on the other.

As I have suggested, the infectious, vocal, collective nature of audience response to early cinema stands in stark contrast to classic movie spectatorship, which started with the ascendancy of self-contained fictional narrative films around 1907,[46] was followed by Hollywood's rise to power in the second decade of the twentieth century, and was secured for good with the introduction of talkies in the late 1920s. Once Hollywood's hegemony took hold, the muteness of the figures on the screen was transposed to the mute spectator, interpellated as a subject who sits alone, absorbed in darkness,

voyeuristically identifying with the images projected before him or her.[47] Whereas early screen silence could be filled by the vocal responses of viewers, the solitary, passive spectator became a blank to be inscribed by the stories that classic Hollywood cinema tells. The 1896 Biograph displays of trains, waterfalls, and a sauntering presidential candidate suggest alternative ways that audiences might be constituted, allowing for a wider range of interplay between public and private response to disembodied moving pictures than we may currently enjoy.[48]

Yet Hansen's analysis of early cinema viewing strikes me as perhaps overly utopian, given my own extended discussion of the Biograph debut. It is certainly risky to generalize on the basis of a single screening, however well documented, particularly since movie audiences in 1896 would significantly differ from those a decade later.[49] Nor should my reading of the newspaper reception be mistaken for full-blown theorizing about the public sphere. Still, the case of *McKinley at Home* indicates a highly calculated piece of filmmaking and film exhibition that seems to have left some room, but not a lot, for its viewers to reclaim meaning on their own terms.[50] I therefore propose a more dialectical model for understanding early cinema's relation to the public sphere. In this view, still focusing on the figure of President McKinley, we begin by appreciating the power of the mass medium to collapse space and time for a pointed effect: to present moving images of an important public figure at once intimate and immediate, and disembodied and cut off from context (as in the Republican and Biograph simulation of the news). We can then see how audiences confronted by these unstable images might have actively asserted themselves by revising and recontextualizing what they saw. In the face of cinema's increasingly sophisticated reality effects, if and how audiences could continue to appropriate meaning for themselves would become a proposition more and more difficult to sustain.

II

Charles Musser, following influential film theorists such as Benjamin, André Bazin, and Christian Metz, has usefully summarized cinema's tendency toward disembodiment as "the absence of presence."[51] But perhaps a more apt phrase for early cinema's uncanny incarnations might be the presence of absence, in that filmmakers and exhibitors in the years following 1896 quickly discovered ways to actively exploit the capacity for phantasmagoric immediacy. Of particular interest here are faked actualities, simulations or reenactments of actual events such as boxing matches, with actors

substituting for the "real" performers.[52] As my quotes around the word "real" suggest, such "reproductions" or "impersonations" (as they were titled) had little to do with the relation between moving image and referential fact, unlike the initial accounts of Biograph's rushing train and strolling candidate. Rather, these simulations served to call into question the relation of one image to another, especially considering that performances like boxing or the staging of religious passion plays were themselves highly conventionalized displays.[53] Once filmmakers begin to imitate each other in a competition to find the most popular subjects to film, the question of originality—the bedrock source of representation—tended to recede into the background. While rival filmmakers traded charges of "genuine" versus "counterfeit" in describing their products, and audiences might have occasionally worried about the ontological status of the spectacles they were watching, for the most part it seemed not to matter much if it were truly the boxer Jim Jeffries on the screen or an impersonator, as long as the images of the bodies in motion were clear and vibrant.[54]

These filmed reenactments reached their apex during the 1898 Spanish-American War, which was followed two years later by the Anglo-Boer War.[55] It is no coincidence that once again certain kinds of corporeal effects in early cinema, especially shots of the active male body, closely parallel a key moment in U.S. politics, in this case the nation's opening imperialist foray into global expansion. A full analysis of President McKinley's ambivalent foreign policy leading up to and during the Spanish-American War is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that, in finally endorsing "the enforced pacification of Cuba . . . in the name of humanity, in the name of civilization, in behalf of endangered American interests," McKinley freely admitted that "the commerce, trade, and business of our people" were his primary concern in declaring war.[56] The crucial function of the yellow press in drumming up domestic support for the war effort is well known, especially the role of the Hearst and Pulitzer papers, which were engaged in a circulation war of their own. Seeking at all costs for sensational information and entertainment for their readers to consume, American war correspondents flocked to Cuba in order to make the news, playing the part of soldiers and participating in battles, as much as documenting the action.[57]

Cinema's role as a "visual newspaper" during the Spanish-American War is lesser known. Boosting lagging sales by boosting patriotic fever, Edison and Biograph primarily filmed and exhibited panoramic views of the nation's preparations for war (soldiers drilling, ships heading off to Cuba or the Philippines, and the wreck of the battleship *Maine*) and the war's aftermath (numerous victory parades).[58] These films became so prevalent during

the first half of 1898, in fact, that one vaudeville venue began to dub its cinema projector a "War-Graph," one of many such electronic "device[s] for stirring patriotism," as a New York trade paper put it.[59] Given the bulkiness of American moving cameras before 1900, attempts to film the field of battle itself largely proved impractical and the conditions of war too difficult to capture. In the absence of battle footage, cameramen back home began producing simulations of conflict: skirmishes and sinkings fashioned in Florida, on rooftops, and even in bathtubs (with miniature models).[60] A striking clip titled *Shooting Captured Insurgents,* for example, shows Spanish soldiers summarily execute four Cuban rebels against the side of a jungle hut. Only an overly histrionic fling of the arm on the part of one of the victims betrays the firing squad "shooting" as fabricated theater filmed most likely in New Jersey.[61]

I should emphasize again that this was nothing new: throughout the nineteenth century, Americans were accustomed to seeing staged reenactments of historical events in other forms of popular amusement. Nor do I wish to dwell on the deceitful intention of such films. As with other faked actualities, many of these war scenes were openly advertised as "counterfeit presentments," and even if they were not billed as such, their veracity or authenticity was less at issue than how thrilling they seemed. For both audience and makers, in other words, the quest for sensation tended to render the opposition between fact and fiction moot.[62] Whether the projection on the screen was the actual battleship *Maine* or another ship posing as the *Maine,* the phantom image was immediate, vivid, and powerful, capable of invoking intense patriotic responses from the cheering vaudeville audiences. My main point is that these intimate simulations, frequently accompanied by the running commentary of a lecturer on stage, reveal an important dimension of our global conflict as a whole: that in the national imaginary, starting with McKinley, the Spanish-American War was largely conducted "at home," to borrow once more from the title of the 1896 campaign film. Whereas in that film "home" served to carry national politics to the candidate's personal front porch, in the war films such domesticity is constituted and defined in terms of concepts of the foreign as much as concepts of the public.[63]

Most of the handful of surviving cinematic images of the president taken between 1898 and 1901 show McKinley engaged in a variety of ceremonial tasks, such as reviewing inaugural and military parades.[64] But another group of films made during the last days of McKinley's administration dramatize more urgently how cinema could help shape a national imaginary. In the wake of the Spanish-American War, the Buffalo Pan-American Exposition

of 1901 was designed to celebrate the ascendancy of the United States as a world power and promote better commercial relations between the nation and its neighbors to the South.[65] The exposition actually had two themes: it reaffirmed the Monroe Doctrine (to retrospectively make sense of the recent conflict with Spain) and applauded technological progress, symbolized by the electricity generated from harnessing the enormous natural force of nearby Niagara Falls (recall that this was a key subject in Biograph's 1896 New York debut). President McKinley sought to combine these two themes in his final speech, which dwelt on the "genius of the inventor and the courage of the investor" in hastening global communications and trade.[66] Delivered at the exposition on September 5, 1901, the day before he was shot, and filmed by Edwin S. Porter of Edison's company, McKinley's last speech carries greater resonance when compared to other Pan-American Exposition films taken by Porter that more actively drew on the fair's emblematic mise-en-scène.

Three are of particular interest: *Pan-American Exposition by Night* (registered for copyright on October 17, 1901), *Sham Battle at the Pan-American Exposition* (copyrighted November 25, 1901), and *The Mob Outside the Temple of Music at the Pan-American Exposition* (copyrighted September 11, 1901). The day-to-night film is a beautiful sweeping panoramic two-shot, time-lapse composition highlighting the fair's chief symbol, the four-hundred-foot electric tower illuminated by thirty-five thousand lightbulbs that were energized by Niagara Falls. Dramatizing how colossal forces of nature can be tamed, the fair's illuminated tower was a bigger outdoor version of the "Edison Tower of Light" that Edison had exhibited in the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exhibition to glorify America's industrial dominance.[67] This film therefore functions essentially as a spectacular corporate advertisement for Edison, genius inventor and investor (to echo a phrase from McKinley's last speech), whose electrical devices, including cinema, were helping to further the cause of America's global expansion.

Attempting to shrink the globe to a manageable space for the public's viewing pleasure, world fairs in general are by nature phantasmagoric productions necessarily driven by a logic of simulation. Like cinema itself, world's fairs displace both time and space. The Pan-American Exposition of 1901 was no exception. As Porter's films show, its pavilions included "Darkest Africa," "Japanese Village," and "Esquimaux Village," complete with African and Japanese and Eskimo performers on display dancing and playing and just being authentically themselves amid ersatz huts and igloos.[68] But the most dramatic show Edison's crew shot was an internal affair—a smoke-filled gun battle between U.S. foot soldiers and hostile native Ameri-

cans circling on horses that was staged on the closing day of the exposition. A reenactment of Custer's Last Stand and other frontier episodes on the road leading to Indian genocide, the battle clearly followed on a long tradition of popular touring Wild West shows such as Buffalo Bill's. Yet in the aftermath of the recent Spanish-American War, and in the context of an exhibition dedicated to our international relations, the inclusion of military action against natives functions as an uncanny replay of our imperialist venture abroad, domesticating or bringing the 1898 war home again by recasting it in the familiar and former terms of manifest destiny. Still resisting U.S. occupation in 1901, Filipinos in effect revert back to (already conquered) Indians, who assumed their accustomed role as subjected insurgents for spectators watching the exposition's theater of conflict.[69]

As with the bulk of Spanish-American cinematic reenactments, no attempt was made by Edison to disguise the fact that this film depicts a "sham battle," as its title plainly states. Yet what precisely is being shammed and the effects of such staging remain ambiguous. Placing the camera at a low angle behind the line of soldiers, and pointedly avoiding revealing the viewing stands filled with spectators until the end of the film, Porter produces a powerful simulation of a scene of war.[70] The spectators *in* the film watching the spectacle from the stands would clearly have seen and understood something very different—a mere stage show—from what was understood by the spectators *of* the film, which both then and now resembles actual battle footage. Once again, we see how the disembodied immediacy of cinema heightens the effect of reality: "reality" is defined by the dialectical relation between film's spatiotemporal dislocation, projected moving images of human forms cut off and abstracted from their material heft, and film's recontextualization via the particular circumstances of exhibition and reception.

The third film in this assemblage of Edison's Pan-American movies works quite differently from the sham battle. The day after his President's Day speech of September 5, while greeting well-wishers inside the Temple of Music, McKinley was shot at close range by Leon Czolgosz, a young anarchist with a history of mental instability, who, when apprehended, initially gave his name as "Nieman," Nobody.[71] In the days that followed, as McKinley lay dying (he would finally succumb on the fourteenth), conspiracy-minded police investigated Czolgosz's ties to other anarchists, including Emma Goldman, who was arrested but then released. Taking place amid the phantasmagorical backdrop of a world's fair, the assassination was at once intimate, public, dramatic, and surreal. Unfortunately Edison's film crews were not on the scene to capture the drama: no equivalent of the Zapruder

home movie depicting JFK's assassination exists for us to muse upon.[72] But given the common practice of the Spanish-American War reenactments, it should come as no surprise that the filmmakers subsequently toyed with the possibility of restaging the murder in front of movie cameras. They had second thoughts about the idea, however, leaving the simulation of the assassination to the French film company Pathé.[73] In the absence of the actual crime, as word of the shooting spread, Edison's film crews contented themselves with filming the crowd milling outside the Temple of Music, where they had gathered to await the emergence of the president.

It is a rather unsettling news film. Dozens of densely packed bodies, with no room to move, are shown in a panoramic sweep from behind, looking expectantly at the Temple of Music. Virtually every inch of the frame is filled with agitated human figures, mostly the backs of heads. Occasionally, a man or a child will turn and face the camera directly, revealing relatively close-up looks of puzzlement or distress. In the distance, framing the top of the shot, we see police and other officials seeking to keep the crowd from entering the building. We can also see newspaper correspondents seated at tables urgently composing reports of the shooting—a rare and revealing literalization of the way that written news translates into cinematic news in the process of being visually documented by the movie camera. As with the 1896 campaign clip showing McKinley reading a telegram, film serves to give newsprint the powerful impression of immediacy.

Edison copyrighted this actuality on September 11 (while McKinley was still alive but dying), choosing, in its title, to call the crowd a "mob"—a word that rarely if ever appears in Edison's film listings, indeed nowhere in any other film company's catalogs printed between 1896 and 1910.[74] By using the highly charged term *mob* to describe the scene, Edison is clearly drawing a parallel between the anarchism of Czolgosz, the intended effect of his action, and the subsequent chaotic reaction of the panicked and packed throng, who began calling for the lynching of the assassin.[75] The (missing) moment of murder itself becomes less central here than its consequences: the fleeting possibility entertained in this film that Czolgosz might have succeeded in producing anarchism, at least of a local nature. Indeed, once we see that the term *mob* may apply to the potential audiences who would watch this film as well as the crowd depicted within it, then the anxiety of Edison's filmmakers to control the response of the masses becomes all the more urgent, to help construe or reconstruct a body politic with less chaotic potency.

On film and throughout the nation at large, such anarchistic potential was quickly foreclosed, primarily by way of the tremendously popular

series of funeral films that Edison and other companies shot and packaged for exhibitors around the country. Never before had citizens seen an American state funeral projected on-screen. As with previous rituals of national mourning, such as the funerals of assassinated presidents Lincoln and Garfield, newspapers worked to help console the public and consolidate their grief, but now with the additional support of moving images. Shot in Buffalo; Washington, D.C.; and Canton, Ohio, these films literally helped to restore rules of order by visually organizing bodies and space within the frame along familiar lines. In these films, that is, the "mob" gives way to the controlled funeral procession, itself a close approximation of the military parades of orderly marching figures that McKinley had presided over while living, with President Roosevelt now assuming his ceremonial role.

But unlike in earlier cinematic depictions of funerals, such as Edison's 1898 *Burial of the "Maine" Victims,* frequently in this sequence of films as much attention is paid to the spectators as the funeral procession itself. Of particular note in this regard is the film *President McKinley's Funeral Cortege at Washington, D.C.,* which shows a variety of close-up shots of individual onlookers—men, women, and children, including a number of formally attired African Americans—who look directly at the camera and then back at the procession. That African Americans are not merely included but prominently featured at a time and place of racial segregation suggests the deep desire of the filmmakers to embrace the public in the widest sense. In this way all viewers of the film could identify with the viewers in the film and share their common grief as citizens of the United States.

McKinley's funeral ceremonies offered Americans the most obvious and most important means to achieve a sense of closure within the confines of a national public sphere. Although public, such closure was not designed to serve as a referendum on McKinley's administration but rather to forestall opinion altogether. Even newspapers intensely hostile to McKinley, such as Hearst's *New York Journal,* ran a full-length front-page editorial titled "FAREWELL TO A GOOD AMERICAN" that sang the praises of the fallen commander in chief.[76] This kind of focused mourning in print and on film worked to erase differences (if only temporarily) and provide the semblance of national unity. While exhibitors could buy individual films and show them in any order they pleased, Edison also offered a prepackaged sequence that moved chronologically from Buffalo to Washington to Ohio, ending with the slain president's burial in Canton's Westlawn Cemetery—the final, permanent, and somewhat ironic twist to the pervasive trope of "McKinley at home."[77]

In the aftermath of the September assassination, following the October

29 execution of Czolgosz, book publishers scrambled to produce memorial accounts of McKinley in time for Christmas gift-giving. The Library of Congress lists nearly two dozen such books registered for copyright by the end of 1901. This means that publishers had less than two months to write, compile, print, and distribute these four-hundred- to five-hundred-page hardbound books that comprehensively detailed McKinley's life and death with print, photographs, and lavish illustrations.[78] Such a subgenre of keepsake memorial books owes something to the analogous subgenre of the campaign biography, with its boilerplate assemblage of speeches and testimonials. But apart from their profit motive, the impetus for these urgent publications, astonishing in their rapid assembly and bulk, can be more fruitfully linked to the rise of cinema, which had conditioned its audience to expect instant ocular information: news in the making or immediately after its making. Unlike daily newspapers, moreover, films of such import could be shown and reshown for months to come. Although these books could not quite rival the speed of cinema or newspaper in distributing images nationally, these material memorials did provide a less ephemeral source of consolation for readers to preserve and give to one another and, thereby, helped sustain collective rituals of mourning.

In early October, Edison produced another spectacle for exhibition that similarly sought to memorialize McKinley beyond the present moment. Described in the company's catalog as being "most valuable as an ending to the series of McKinley's funeral pictures," *The Martyred Presidents* offers a series of still photographs of Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley, after the fashion of a magic lantern show, followed by a static tableau: either the assassin or a mourner kneeling beneath an allegorical figure holding the scales of justice.[79] Here we see film returning to its roots in nineteenth-century popular visual and theater culture to approximate the long-standing iconography of martyrdom, in which the slain body is frozen and fixed for eternity.

In its complex self-referentiality, a third and final form of cinematic closure deserves more careful attention. On the day of Czolgosz's execution in late October, an Edison crew including Edwin S. Porter and James White traveled to Auburn Prison in upstate New York (near Buffalo's Pan-American Exposition) to capture the assassin's punishment. The cameramen were turned back at the gate. Apparently some events, including state-sanctioned acts of retribution, were beyond the reach of moving pictures, even though such gruesome spectacles had been popular forms of entertainment and discipline for hundreds of years. The public would have to be content with newspaper reports, which in advance had been stirring up interest in the occasion.[80] Or so it would seem. After taking two panoramic

shots of the prison's exterior, Porter and White returned to Edison's recently completed studio in New York City. Closely following eyewitness newspaper accounts, they filmed two studio scenes that restaged the execution, using actors to play the parts of criminal, guards, doctors, state officials, and witnesses. Edison's men had missed the moment of McKinley's murder, but they were determined not to miss out on the murder of his assassin. The resulting film, *Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison*, was distributed in two parts to allow exhibitors to show exterior and interior scenes separately,[81] but it is the four-shot whole, a striking hybrid of actuality footage and theatrical reenactment, that most forcefully dramatizes early cinema's developing capacity to plot and sustain a powerful kind of excitement of its own.

The film's two exterior high-angle shots offer a sweeping panorama of the prison's imposing walls, with a train, that most favored of early cinema subjects, moving parallel to the walls in the foreground. The film thus opens with a Foucauldian gesture celebrating the movie camera as an instrument of surveillance. But it is the camera's apparent ability to penetrate inside the prison that produces its uncanny magic, as bare tree branches outside the prison wall dissolve into the rectilinear bricked wall that makes up the prisoner's cell. Yet the transition between outside and inside is hardly seamless, in that the interior sets call attention to themselves as fake. As Charles Musser has pointed out in his important discussion of the film, this interior scene showing Czolgosz looking out from the barred doorway of his cell, as well as his subsequent removal by guards and the following scene of his entrance into the death chamber, "are photographed against sets that show a single wall running perpendicular to the axis of the camera lens. . . . The images lack almost all suggestion of depth—flattened not only by the sets but by the actors, who move parallel to the walls."[82]

In other words, even though the acting is subdued in an effort to heighten cinematic verisimilitude (as opposed to exaggerated stage melodrama), the flatness of the mise-en-scène robs the entire film of depth, particularly in the slow, solemn march of the squeezed two-dimensional human figures walking across the frame from the prison cell to the electric chair. Dissolving from exterior to interior produces not a unified sense of realism but rather a sort of twilight zone of self-conscious simulation whose continuity depends on prison walls, exterior (actual) and interior (artificial). These walls mark the limit of the movie camera's vision past which we cannot see. It would perhaps be too much to claim that the film contains a postmodern impression of its own fictionality in relation to the fictionality of the world it purports to represent. Yet following so closely in the wake of

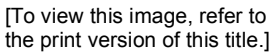

Figure 3. *Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison* (1901).

the Pan-American Exposition's staged effects, *Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison* does carry an eerie feel for its own ersatz status as news, as we can appreciate most clearly in the final, death chamber scene (see fig. 3).

The scene opens with a full frontal shot of an empty electric chair being tested by means of a bank of lightbulbs. As Miriam Hansen has shrewdly suggested, these lights refer directly back to the lights illuminating the exposition's electric tower.[83] In a single unbroken circuit, the power of the state to punish President McKinley's killer by electrocution merges with the power of the genius inventor Edison to harness electricity, which in turn merges with the power of his corporation's filmmakers to represent such spectacles. Facing one another, movie camera and electric chair become mirror images, so that a new technology proclaimed to reproduce life uncannily serves to register the process of dying. This doubling between chair and camera carries all the more import when we consider how in the late 1880s Edison, overcoming some initial reluctance, helped pioneer the use of electrocution for criminals.[84] Cinema's capacity to execute its models culminates with the impersonation of the anarchist's end. To quote from the Edison catalog's own description, after the prisoner is brought in and strapped to the chair, the "current is turned on at a signal from the Warden, and the assassin heaves heavily as though the straps would break. He drops prone after the current is turned off. The doctors examine the body and

report to the Warden that he is dead, and he in turn officially announces the death to the witnesses."[85] To give his final declaration, the official turns directly to the camera, suggesting how in the process of viewing the film we have become those witnesses for the state.

Witnessing such an act of morbid disembodiment directly as the reenacted execution of a presidential assassin, we are reminded of the authority of the state as well as the power of the filmmaker to reproduce that authority so effectively and efficiently, albeit in such a ghostly fashion. One sort of current is turned on, so that another will soon forever shut down. Passing from life to death, the figure on the screen goes from motion to frozen stillness, literally becomes Nobody (Nieman), thereby reversing the normal animating process by which cinema works its magic. This reversal is all the more unsettling in that electricity throughout the nineteenth century was typically regarded as the very the medium of animation (think of *Frankenstein*): the body's nervous life force, not the harbinger of death. Such an arresting process of physical disembodiment thus foregrounds the kind of disembodied immediacy that we saw in other early filmed historical reenactments. But however remarkable a reproduction, the film did not occasion much, if any, comment in the newspapers.[86] Cinema by 1901 was simply too commonplace a medium to warrant any particular mention, so that empirically assessing audience response becomes virtually impossible.

Execution of Czolgosz was clearly calculated to serve as a harsh warning against revolutionaries, but what was the effect of such a warning? It is certainly difficult to imagine *Czolgosz* being used as a recruiting film for anarchists, yet it is equally difficult to think that the sobering evocation of the technology of death could trigger the same sort of vocal patriotic cheering that greeted the Republican campaign and Spanish-American War films. Nor is it easy to suppose what a lecturer on stage might have said to accompany the showing of this somber film. Made at a time in the early stages of cinema when the generic categories of "documentary" versus "fiction" had yet to become firmly established, the film in its curious hybrid form seems to oscillate uneasily between historical fact and grim, obscene amusement, akin to a snuff film. Crime and punishment, death and dying, would shortly become mainstays of classic Hollywood fictional narratives, while filmed actualities, documentaries, and newsreels would become more and more marginalized genres. But how would viewers in 1901, unaccustomed to the ways of seeing cinema that we take for granted today, understand what they were watching?

Given the absence of any available historical information about its reception, we are left to ponder the film's enigmatic qualities more directly for

ourselves. Unlike McKinley's state funeral, the state execution of his assassin took place behind closed prison walls. A kind of cleansing or purging of the body politic, this act of grave national consequence was brought to the public only through the mediation of a select group of eyewitnesses, primarily newspaper reporters. Attempting yet again to contain and control the passions of the "mob," such print functioned to distance citizens from the moment of death, which was hidden from view. As Michel Foucault has argued, public executions gradually disappeared during the nineteenth century as the open torture of the condemned's body gave way to a complex set of mediations about the nature of crime and criminality itself.[87] But in so immediately communicating pictures of the execution to vaudeville venues, Edison's filmmakers cut out the middlemen, presuming to give their audiences a succession of powerful images of the stilling of the condemned without the intervention of the press or other sorts of juridical authority. Seeing the news entailed an experience different from reading it. Yet this was not a simple return to popular shows of physical punishment staged for eager crowds, since the filmed space of execution (its representation) and the space of film exhibition (its reception) here shared a claustrophobic closeness. As eyewitnesses for the state, viewers were compelled to gaze in mute wonder upon a moving spectacle at once intimate and on national display. In so offering an insider's look at what the state wanted every citizen to know but none to see, *Execution of Czolgosz* signals a kind of breakdown between publicity and privacy. By virtue of early cinema's capacity to make such national news of its own, the president's assassin is finally and fatally brought home, like McKinley before him.

2 Looking Out

Visualizing Self-Consciousness

> Persons are bodies which move.
> JAMES MARK BALDWIN (1894)

After the criminal Czolgosz is strapped into the electric chair, before the current is switched on to surge through his body, the prison guards in Edison's filmed 1901 reenactment (and presumably in the real event) pause to blindfold the assassin. As Foucault remarks, the practice of veiling the condemned that began a century before marks a key turning point in the history of public executions: "The condemned man was no longer to be seen. Only the reading of the sentence on the scaffold announced the crime—and that crime must be faceless. (The more monstrous a criminal was, the more he must be deprived of light: he must not see, or be seen. . . .) The last vestige of the great public execution was its annulment: a drapery to hide the body."[1]

As Foucault suggests, this veiling is particularly directed at vision, since mutual eye contact, seeing and being seen, is the primary way that humans establish intersubjectivity. This social circuit must be blocked and broken between public and condemned, so that the blindfolded criminal is robbed of his expressive interiority and becomes distanced, a mere thing, in advance of his actually turning into a corpse, and so that the citizens who witness his punishment need not fear his uneasy look of death. If Czolgosz had stared directly at his audience, what would that look have meant?

In this chapter I consider the gaze of persons on-screen directed outward, toward the camera. So much emphasis has been placed on conditions of early cinema exhibition and its effects on spectators that relatively little has been said about a reverse sort of spectatorship: what people initially did in front of the camera lens, and how their awareness of being filmed tangibly altered their conduct. I propose to concentrate on the behavior of these curious figures caught in their daily routines between acting and posing, their attention divided between the action taking place around them and the presence of the camera recording these events.[2] My aim is not to offer a for-

mal typology of the look per se but rather to show how the early movie camera functioned as a distinct apparatus of self-objectification, at once triggering self-consciousness and registering it as a moving visual process.[3] As no other medium could, early cinema documented the corporeal signs by which persons became acutely aware of themselves in relation to others.

In a well-known 1910 commentary, the *New York Dramatic Mirror* columnist Frank Wood admonished actors against looking at the movie camera, a tendency he suggestively called "play[ing] to the front": "When the movement or attitude of the player is obviously unnatural in turning his face toward the camera he betrays by the act the fact that he is acting—that there is someone in front unseen by the spectator to whom the actor is addressing himself. Immediately the sense of reality is destroyed and the hypnotic illusion that has taken possession of the spectator's mind, holding him by the power of visual suggestion, is gone."[4] Emphasizing the effect of acting on the "spectator's mind," Wood deftly articulates the emergent conventions of viewing that would dominate classic Hollywood filmmaking for the remainder of the century: that acting should not appear as such, that the camera be rendered invisible, its material presence banished from the spectator's thoughts, and that the world on-screen be sealed off and self-contained to sustain the illusion of its reality.

While there are some exceptions (moments in Fritz Lang's silent films or the Marx brothers' comedies, for example), we now take for granted this naturalizing of the cinematic player's "movement" or "attitude," as Wood dubs it. That Wood felt compelled to advise actors to ignore the camera suggests that even in 1910 diegetic codes for cinematic narration were still not firmly in place, despite the fact that story films had become the prevailing mode since around 1906. The first decade of early cinema, then, before Wood's prohibition effectively became law, affords us a special opportunity to see how people comported themselves in the presence of a camera that had not yet disappeared from either their sight or the awareness of those viewing these films.

Wood sought to normalize and codify cinematic acting, as opposed to stage acting, by drawing a sharp distinction between spectator and audience. Wood located the audience in an ambiguous space "which is not seen in the picture but which appears to be located in front of the scene."[5] For an actor to acknowledge such an intermediary space would be to ruin the process of identification or visual suggestion by which cinema could work its hypnotic magic. In the early years of cinema, such frontal looks were common, particularly since many filmmakers drew heavily on vaudeville acts (Edison) and magic acts (Méliès), in which players were accustomed to directly addressing their audience. Given my focus on the visual representation of

corporeal self-consciousness, these sorts of early films are relatively uninteresting, in that experienced stage performers like Eugene Sandow or May Irwin could go about their business in front of the camera without deviating significantly from their theater routines. In such cases the performer in effect rendered the camera transparent by looking through it to the implied audience on the other side. The same attitudes struck on stage would work equally well projected on the screen (or work even better, as I discuss in the interlude following this chapter).

Here Wood's distinction between audience and spectator would be largely moot, since these filmed theater acts were not trying to suggest a self-contained illusion of reality.[6] Skipping over such theatrical performances, I focus instead on a number of movies showing people captured in the act but not necessarily on stage: figures whose awareness of being photographed makes them present themselves in particular ways. I concentrate on single-shot actualities rather than story films, examining the filming of "real" people as opposed to professional actors deliberating playing a part.[7] Yet analyzing the dynamics of self-perception and self-presentation, how people forge roles for themselves in front of the camera, also allows me to complicate the standard binary opposition in early cinema scholarship between factual and fictional genres.

How are these subjects produced? And what, exactly, do I mean by self-objectification? Still photography, not theater or portrait painting, affords the closest analogy to explain how self-consciousness becomes externalized and embodied in early moving pictures. In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes gives a brilliant account of what it feels like to be photographed:

> Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of "posing," I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. . . . I lend myself to the social game, I pose, I know I am posing, I want you to know that I am posing, but (to square the circle) this additional message must in no way alter the precious essence of my individuality. . . . I want a History of Looking. For the Photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity. . . . In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art. In other words, a strange action: I do not stop imitating myself, and because of this, each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes of imposture (comparable to certain nightmares). . . . I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object.[8]

Barthes goes on to define this ghostly experience of dissociation as "a micro-version of death," part of his larger argument associating photography with stasis, arrest, countermemory, and death—matters I address in my book's conclusion. Because Barthes makes such a sharp contrast between still photography's motionless *"Totality-of-Image,"* as opposed to cinema's continuous temporal flow,[9] when he describes the alienating effects of being photographed ("myself as other") he is compelled to focus on his thoughts leading up to the shutter's click, rather than on the resulting picture itself. Even though he insists that having his image taken compels him to "make another body for myself," he says little about how this newly assumed body is documented in the actual photograph. In other words, in order to understand self-consciousness as a temporal process of becoming, a transformation of one state into another, he can verbally tell us what it feels like to have his picture taken, but he cannot tell us what such photographs themselves look like—how this self-objectification is visually captured. But precisely because cinema records bodies and expressions over time, it can display this uncanny process of "self-imitation" (to modify Barthes's resonant phrase), particularly at an early stage of its history before the movie camera, pace Frank Wood, would disappear from view.

Treating the photographic camera as an instance of the gaze of the Other, Barthes's bemused account of being photographed resides somewhere Jean-Paul Sartre's sinister version of intersubjectivity and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's far more upbeat assessment. In Sartre's rendering, the body is simply an incomprehensible being-for-itself until the introduction of the Other, an encounter that undermines subjectivity by compelling us now to experience our body as an alienated object, a source of shame.[10] Implicitly criticizing Sartre's assumptions, Merleau-Ponty remarks that "in fact the other's gaze transforms me into an object, and mine him, only if both of us withdraw into the core of our thinking nature, if we both make ourselves into an inhuman gaze, if each of us feels his actions to be not taken up and understood, but observed as if they were an insect's."[11] There are gazes and there are gazes, and Merleau-Ponty's sense of the subject's own body schema is sufficiently robust (as I discussed in my introduction) to resist the depersonalizing tendencies of the regard of the Other. Posing before the camera, Barthes steers a middle course, acknowledging the "cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity," as he puts it, but also affirming his ability at least to make another body for "myself" (still in first person), however unauthentic it may feel.

While Barthes's account of the camera clearly owes something to modern French philosophical debates between existentialism and phenomenol-

ogy, it also partakes of a wider and earlier intellectual tradition from the late nineteenth century that centered on concepts of mimesis (or "self-imitation" in Barthes's updating) to account for the social genesis of personhood: identity as emerging from interaction with others. In other words, we become "ourselves as others see us," to borrow from a lecture title by the 1890s picture playwright Alexander Black.[12] At the risk of briefly setting aside our focus on cinema, I propose to delve into this history of ideas for a few pages in order to help explain exactly how the early movie camera's visualizing of self-consciousness is linked to important questions about the nature of subjectivity, especially in relation to the body.

To simplify a bit, around the turn of the twentieth century theories of mimesis developed within three closely related national contexts, French, German, and American.[13] Starting with Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, and Hippolyte Bernheim, whose clinical studies appeared in France in the 1880s, various thinkers became fascinated with the larger implications of hypnosis and suggestion, the way that one person's representations or ideas can forcefully act upon the nervous system of another. Hypnotism or automatism in this sense was not simply a pathological condition but a broader feature of daily life.[14] This notion of mimetic influence was adapted by their countrymen Gabriel Tarde and Gustave Le Bon, among others, who were working in a more sociological vein. For Tarde, for instance, society itself rested on mimesis, the fundamental laws of imitation, as he put it, which, like laws of nature, dictated all social facts to the extent that "the somnambulist and the social man are possessed by the illusion that their ideas, all of which have been suggested to them, are spontaneous." He likened this group formation to "inter-psychical photography," the "action which consists of a quasi-photographic reproduction of a cerebral image upon the sensitive plate of another brain."[15] In other words, you become yourself by adopting the images, gestures, and attitudes of those around you in a process akin to taking photographs. Le Bon too focused on the power of images: specifically, what he saw as their darker potential to sway crowds and irresistibly compel them to act irrationally or criminally. In this view society is little more than a hypnotized mob or "collective mind" perpetually requiring restraint and control.[16]

Tarde's description of the brain as a photographic plate that passively but automatically registered impressions suggests how these sociological accounts of mimesis tended to be idealist in nature, equating images with ideas (and bypassing language), overlooking the significance of individual difference, and neglecting the complex psychological and corporeal mechanisms by which persons copy one another. For Tarde, society emerged from

a spectral, disembodied process of imitation. Yet a second account of subjectivity that was developed in Germany, heavily indebted to Darwin's theories of natural selection, suggested a more material basis for mimesis. Wilhelm Wundt was a prodigious writer on a wide variety of topics but is best known for starting the first experimental laboratory in Europe dedicated to the empirical analysis of human behavior. This laboratory helped to establish psychology as a scientific discipline rather than a branch of metaphysics, as it had been treated earlier in the nineteenth century. Wundt specifically pioneered the field of physiological psychology, which sought to examine the intimate links between the mind and physiological processes of brain and body, which move most often from external cause (stimulus) to inner effect (sensation). While at times Wundt and his followers could only assert these basic connections between psychology and physiology as givens by way of "black box" sorts of explanations, such as instinct, his model at least had the advantage of appreciating the importance of somatic experience.[17]

Around the turn of the twentieth century, just as cinema was emerging as a distinct sort of screen practice, a group of American pragmatists, sociologists, and psychologists, many of whom studied in France and Germany and were heavily influenced by the theories of Tarde and Wundt, worked in various ways to articulate a richer, more complex account of social mimesis. This group included William James, Josiah Royce, James Mark Baldwin, Charles Horton Cooley, Franklin Giddings, William McDougall, Robert Ezra Park, Edward Ross, and George Herbert Mead, among others. Countering the totalitarian implications of Tarde's theories, which tended to view subjects as impressionable and obedient conformists governed by social regulation, these thinkers struggled to imagine citizens retaining a measure of independence and agency, even as they recognized that the genesis of individuality was fundamentally social, or as Royce put it in 1894, echoing Tarde, "self-consciousness itself, in each one of us, is a product of imitation."[18]

Tarde's theories were most profoundly revised and challenged by George Herbert Mead. Reacting against Tarde's mechanical notion of imitation as a kind of hypnotic suggestion that threatened to erase all difference between self and other, Mead posited a less pliable self marked by a fundamental kind of internal difference, based on "the picture of ourselves which we are carrying around with us," so that to imitate others is finally to imitate (always already) ourselves.[19] Drawing on a less high-tech metaphor for vision, Charles Horton Cooley developed a comparable notion of the "looking-glass self": "A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride

or mortification. . . . The thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind."[20] Here Mead's and Cooley's accounts of the spectacle of emergent selfhood closely resemble Barthes's anecdote of posing before the camera, which occasions an identical sort of splitting within the subject.

Against the mechanistic parallelism of Wundt, they similarly strived to provide a fuller explanation for the relation between mind and body. Positing consciousness as a stream of inward thoughts and associations, for example, William James nonetheless insisted that "the sense of our own bodily existence is the nucleus of all reality." In his hierarchical scale of worth, he ranked "the material self" at the bottom—compared with "the social self," "the spiritual self," and "the pure Ego." Even so, throughout *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) he returned to pose various questions about the role of the body in shaping self-consciousness, beginning with a fundamental one: "And our bodies themselves, are they simply ours, or are they *us*?"[21] James is often better at asking questions than answering them, and for a clearer response to these key entangled issues raised by Tarde and Wundt—the relation of our bodies to ourselves, and the relation of bodies to each other—we would do well to turn to James Mark Baldwin, the first scholar (in 1897) to define his discipline as "social psychology."[22] Baldwin may also help us address a third issue about the very mechanisms of relationship—that is, whether these persistent comparisons (by Tarde, Mead, and others) between photography and the copying of persons are simply loose metaphors or perhaps imply something more profound about the intimate connection between technologies of vision, especially movie cameras, and self-consciousness as bodily manifested.

Baldwin is not very well known today, because of a 1908 public scandal that forced him to resign his post at Johns Hopkins University and to continue his professional career abroad.[23] But around the turn of the twentieth century, he enjoyed high academic status as both an experimental scientist and a more theoretically inclined psychologist. After graduating from Princeton in 1884, Baldwin studied with Wundt in Leipzig, attending his lectures and serving as an experimental subject. After setting up his own laboratory of experimental psychology in Toronto (Canada's first), he returned to Europe in 1892, visiting Charcot, Janet, and Bernheim to gather information on hypnotism and suggestion. Like other American pragmatist psychologists, Baldwin seemed to synthesize the French and German intellectual traditions in the human sciences. But unlike James or Mead, Baldwin built his biosocial model for understanding mimetic behavior directly from his early

empirical research on childhood development and learning—important work that anticipated the theories of Jean Piaget, Merleau-Ponty, and Jacques Lacan (on the mirror stage). What interested him in particular was the suggestibility of the infant, especially the role of imitation in the child's early development in terms of voluntary motion and the accommodations of habit.

Previous physiological psychologists had posited an ideomotor hypothesis, or what Baldwin called the law of "mental dynamogenesis," the notion that "every state of consciousness tends to realize itself in an appropriate muscular movement."[24] This stimulus, Baldwin contended, was prompted by "a clearly pictured idea, a presentation or object with all its 'meaning,' or a revived image of memory or imagination."[25] Baldwin thus argued (albeit somewhat vaguely) that the stimulation between mind and body depended on visual mechanisms of mediation. His further contribution was to apply this insight to the early development of the child, whose capacity for reflection was still in its formative stages. Using his own baby daughters as experimental subjects, Baldwin sought to understand the inner logic of an infant reaching—at what age, under what circumstances, in what directions, and with which hand (or with both?) will a baby first reach out in space to try to touch an object? This research led him to articulate what he eventually called the "dialectic of personal growth," by which the baby learns to distinguish between persons and objects and, thereby, via imitation, to become a self-conscious person herself. Baldwin divided the process into three stages, beginning with a "projective" stage—that is, simply outward motion or spatial projection. The child's growing awareness of an "active bodily self" inevitably leads to a "subjective" phase, followed by an "ejective" stage. According to Baldwin:

> Persons are bodies which move. And among these bodies which move, which have certain projective attributes, a very peculiar and interesting one is his own body. . . . It is only when a peculiar experience arises which we call effort that there comes that great line of cleavage in his experience which indicates the rise of volition, and which separates off the series now first really *subjective*. . . . It rapidly assimilates to itself all the other elements by which the child's own body differs in his experience from other active bodies. . . . The child's subject sense goes out by a sort of return dialectic to illuminate the other persons. . . . The subject becomes *ejective;* that is, other people's bodies, says the child to himself, have experiences *in them* such as mine has. They are also *me's;* let them be assimilated to my me-copy. . . . My sense of myself grows by imitation of you, and my sense of yourself grows in terms of my sense of myself. Both *ego* and *alter* are thus essentially social; each is a *socius* and each is an imitative creation.[26]

With this line of reasoning, Baldwin arrives at a position similar to Tarde's, but by a very different route. As Baldwin himself, sensitive to accusations of imitation, took pains to clarify, Tarde starts by positing mimesis as a sociological fact and leaves it at that, slighting questions of belief or desire and thereby failing to consider the mechanisms by which persons copy one another.[27] Agreeing that imitation is the central function of society, Baldwin, by contrast, eschews a top-down model in order to examine the local dynamics of this intersubjectivity. Baldwin's account of the baby's growing awareness in relation to her surroundings is especially suggestive in its emphasis on body movement as the material grounds for self-consciousness and sociality. Early cinema, like early childhood (in Baldwin's rendering), similarly makes manifest this very scene of corporeal self-objectification, as the following few examples show.

Let us first turn to a pair of early Lumière actualities. *Moscow, rue Tverskaia* (catalog no. 307), filmed in March 1896 during the coronation of Nicholas II, follows the typical pattern of a Lumière travel view aimed at giving audiences back home a taste of the exotic or unusual. The stationary movie camera is set up to capture the activity of a busy street from the perspective of a deep-focus diagonal shot. The cameraman would crank the camera for forty to fifty seconds, until the film ran out, hoping to catch something interesting in the scene before him, which was assumed to be a fixed preexistent setting (hence the highly specific geographical referent), combined with the impression of the random or the contingent—what will happen on this particular Moscow street during the moment of filming.[28] Contingency for this sort of Lumière view depended upon people: who would show up and what they would do.

As in many other such actualities, pedestrians (mostly heavily bearded men) do quickly move up and down the street through the shot, many casting quizzical glances at the camera and cameraman before hurrying on with their business. But suddenly we see enter at midrange left a tall man in a dark overcoat who looks at the camera and becomes transfixed, stopping next to a lamppost to stare at the camera for the remainder of the shot. Twice he looks over his shoulder to see if something special is being filmed, only to realize (presumably) that there is nothing in particular beyond himself and the others on the street. Given the time and place of the filming, we might reasonably assume that, although he would likely be familiar with still photography, a camera with a strange crank would merit a more sustained look. By virtue of such vaguely menacing staring, seemingly more hostile than curious, he becomes the film's primary focus of attention. Designed specifically to record motion, the Lumière cinématographe here

ironically gains its subject by happening to register a motionless body as rigid and immobile as the lamppost next to him. The solitary figure stands out by standing still. Confronting the lens, the man's suspicious, fixed stare mirrors the stationary camera's own scanning of people and objects, or rather, people as objects.

A second familiar Lumière actuality, *La Partie d'Écarté* (The Card Game, 1896, catalog no. 73) occasions and records a similar sort of transfixion, but one that is more socially complex. Unlike the Moscow street, the setting here is relatively controlled: two men (Lumière père and a family friend) sitting across from each other at a table outdoors (a café, we presume) intently play cards. Another friend sits between them watching the game. The shot is deliberately composed and, in fact, was likely patterned after the series of five paintings of cardplayers *(Les Joueurs de Cartes)* made by Paul Cézanne starting in 1890, including one (now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art) depicting three players seated around a table, witnessed by a fourth figure standing in the background with arms folded, smoking a pipe, who follows the play with intense interest.[29] In the Lumière cinematic version, spectatorship of a very different, more contingent sort is introduced with the appearance from the right of the frame of a waiter (distinguished as such by the apron he is wearing), who has been summoned by the man in the middle to bring bottles of beer for the trio. At this point both the standing waiter and the seated men behave according to predictable social roles. They all are acting quite literally in conformity with the rules of the game, whether it be taking turns throwing down cards, calling for service, politely bringing the tray of bottles and glasses, or carefully pouring the beer (the middle man's task).

The film grows more interesting and curious after the waiter puts down his tray. He lingers by the table, unable to leave the scene, enthralled and excited by the camera. Unlike the seated gentlemen, whose card game and drinking toasts continue, he has nothing to do; his role as waiter is over. His attention thus becomes divided between the action of the card game at his elbow, which he appears to follow with great interest and pleasure, and the presence of the cinématographe (in front of him), at which he steals a few quick glances. He is at once onlooker (within) and looked on (without), a subject in the process of "becoming an object," to borrow Barthes's term. In this regard he functions as a kind of intermediary between the absorbed cardplayers and the camera. To stay and participate in the scene, he self-consciously has cast himself in the role of spectator, commenting on the progress of the game with exaggerated laughter accompanied by a series of broad gestures—nodding, pointing, clapping, bending over, shaking his

[To view this image, refer to the print version of this title.]

Figure 4. *La Partie d'Écarté* (The Card Game, 1896).

head close to the point of hysteria (see fig. 4).[30] While it may make sense to dismiss his feigned hilarity as simply a case of overacting, his nervous response as he is torn between cards and camera works more profoundly as a metacommentary about the larger game at stake here: the presentation of self in daily exchanges with others—social parts unsettled and defamiliarized by the eye of the movie camera even as it registers these roles.

To treat the waiter's dissociated paroxysms of laughter as any kind of acting at all, in fact, smacks of a dubious teleology by assuming that, along the lines of a Hollywood narrative, figures on the screen must deliberately impersonate fictitious characters. Posing rather than acting (to draw again on Barthes), the giddy waiter is impersonating only himself: what he thinks the camera wants him to be and to do in relation to those others around him.

But what about early films that were entirely staged, that in certain limited ways do look forward to self-contained fictional narratives? One of the very earliest Edison kinetoscopic films, *The Barber Shop* (1893), serves as an interesting case in point. Unlike the bulk of Edison films produced in the 1890s, this one is neither a filmed vaudeville act nor an actuality, but rather an attempt to render a scene from ordinary (masculine) daily life. Produced in Edison's Black Maria workshop and studio using Edison employees as amateur players, the film in its simulated setting hovers strangely between a deliberate performance and seeming reality. A barber shaves a seated man while two other men, waiting left and right in the foreground, interact with one another. Charles Musser emphasizes how this film is in keeping with early cinema's operational aesthetic in that it depicts a complete cycle of a

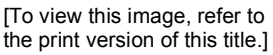

Figure 5. *The Barber Shop* (1893).

work process. Given his interest in exhibition, Musser shrewdly suggests that the film self-reflexively analogizes the ephemeral process of watching moving pictures through a peephole device with the activity of getting shaved: an analogy made explicit by a sign in the background: The Latest Wonder: Shave and Hair Cut for a Nickel, which seems to call attention to the five-cent kinetoscope as well as the shave.[31]

Yet the film is less about the shave itself than the social interaction that attends such a public but intimate process—the barbershop (the film's title) as a community of men. The center of attraction is not the customer's face, sometimes obscured from view, or even the skill of the barber, but rather (as in *The Card Game* with its hilarious waiter) the two joking fellows waiting on the sides. The one on the foreground left is responsible for most of the film's motion, making a big show of taking off his coat, sitting down, smoking his pipe, and slapping his knee when his seated counterpart on the right shows him something funny in the newspaper that he is reading (see fig. 5). Their interaction literally and figuratively frames the act of shaving and gives it a broader social context. And although both barely manage to avoid looking directly at the camera, their self-conscious camaraderie clearly "plays to the front" (to draw on Frank Wood's phrase), as both ignore the scene of shaving taking place near them.

There are a number of contemporaneous descriptions of this brief film that help us understand what viewers imagined they were seeing when they looked at this group of men through the kinetoscope. Beyond illustrating the notorious difficulty of accurate visual memory, even in a film twenty

seconds long, the confusions and contradictions among these accounts (who does what to whom, what the sign reads, and so on) raise larger questions about the status of the figures being represented. Given my focus on social roles, explanations of the man on the right are particularly interesting. Two descriptions assume he is simply a customer, another version calls him an "attendant" (perhaps decoding as a uniform the tight-fitting short jacket he wears), while a fourth defines him as "a coloured gentleman, who is probably acting in the capacity of porter, boot-black, and Jack-of-all-trades."[32] This surprising racial inference is difficult to confirm by looking at the film itself, but more to the point, the man's identification as a porter alters our reading of his interaction with the fellow on the left. Instead of two customers exchanging pleasantries with each other as equals, we have an attendant or jack-of-all-trades in a subservient role who would be expected to amuse waiting customers as part of his job in the barber shop. The (unequal) social exchange between the two men in this case would not be entirely spontaneous but dictated in advance.

These accounts raise similar complications about the nature of the simulation as a whole. One version, intent on describing Edison's demonstration of a new visual technology, rather than the resulting film itself, suggestively calls the barbershop scene "improvised." The account goes on to assert the hiring of an actual "tonsorial artist" but calls the customers "pretended," implying that it was easier for Edison's employees to play the part of customers than the far more dangerous and skilled role of barber.[33] Between actuality and pretense, the term *improvised* neatly captures the unscripted social dynamics of the scene, so that the figures themselves would not necessarily know exactly what roles—customer? attendant? bootblack?—they were trying to assume while being filmed. In this regard, another account implies an even more fundamental self-alienating effect at work in the film. After conjuring up the "coloured" porter, it continues: "Another customer comes in, pulls off hat and coat; *the smoke is plainly seen rising from his pipe;* picks up a paper to read and await his turn. The coloured gentleman aforesaid, finds something very funny in the newspaper he is reading, and thereupon he crosses the room and points out the amusing article to the waiting customer. *They both laugh and show every sign of amusement*" (italics in the original).[34] What so astonishes this early viewer? Not that the kinetoscope directly renders the pair's self-conscious laughter, but rather that the new device registers "every sign of amusement," as if there were some significant distinction between the sign and the thing itself. The italicized phrase "sign of amusement," minus the tone of astonishment, could have come right out of Stephen Crane's contempora-

neous *Maggie* (1894), where characters similarly display the grotesque corporeal markers of emotion, dissociated from any interior states from which we normally assume such emotions to originate. *Maggie* thus flies in the face of conventions of psychological realism prevalent in the nineteenth-century novel by refusing to buy into the assumption that persons can be represented as ready-made selves, preferring instead to imagine these surreal "figures," as Crane repeatedly refers to them, as built and seen strictly from the outside, mere amalgams of fragmented body parts.[35] As in a simulacrum, we have only the imitation of personhood, without any clear sense of the original.

The other visual sign that most impresses this writer is pipe smoke, which he refers to again later in his account: "The smoke of the pipe which the man is smoking is blown across the face of the scene, and slowly disperses in the air—a most remarkable evidence of the fidelity to nature of the kinetoscope reproductions." For a film ostensibly about shaving, the anthropomorphic phrase "face of the scene" (linking smoke to lather) is a striking body metaphor that helps unify the moving picture's visual field. Blown across the face of the scene, the swirling smoke in this sense serves to connect the activity of shaving with the barbershop's foreground socializing that frames the shave. Singling out the smoke as evidence of the kinetoscope's "fidelity to nature," this enchanted viewer locates early film's uncanny mimesis in the world of things and forces, not people—one of a long line of commentaries celebrating film's power to capture the movement of water, wind, fire, and smoke. Perhaps smoke is a bit easier to decipher accurately than social signs of amusement. Or we could suppose that early cinema audiences were more impressed by the motion of trees and waves than persons because they were already accustomed to seeing themselves in still photographs. Yet people's sight of themselves in moving pictures might rather have triggered a certain kind of unease, to be countered by the more authentic forces of nature, as another early commentator suggested in response to seeing a showing of Biograph actualities a few years later (1897):

> What the invention of the alphabet has done in the preservation of the facts of history, the Biograph and kindred inventions promise to do in the restoration of historical atmosphere. The future student of this age will have at his command the moving and glowing simulacra of its vital forces. . . . There is another view [i.e., short film] in which the self-conscious side of humanity is shown. . . . While the camera was true the subjects struck a false note. The scene discloses the Beach at Atlantic City with the surf bursting and flashing into foaming cataracts and the bathers plunging and splashing in the foreground. The waves rise and

> fall as they will do ten centuries to come. They are natural. But that riot of frolicking men and women know beyond peradventure that they are being photographed. There is no repose among them. They are all performing. They splash and hustle each other and cut pigeon wings and throw flipflaps innumerable. . . . And so the future ages can point their own moral.[36]

The moral would seem to be that nature is constant and does not perform (unlike humans) and, therefore, is a truer subject for the movie camera, whose realized presence in front of people causes them to behave like fools. Instead of revealing the essence of individuals, as many had claimed the still camera did (particularly in portraiture), moving pictures in this account falsify human nature by compelling us to self-consciously imitate ourselves—a process which the new technology was all too ready to capture and then show us. Against the disturbing prospect of the posed and performing self—improvised, ephemeral, and counterfeit—nature is posited as perfect and permanent, incapable of pretense.

If the Biograph were to reproduce "historical atmosphere," as this 1897 newspaper article urged, then persons on-screen would have to appear as natural as nature itself. Culminating with the banishment of the gaze at the camera, this cinematic naturalizing of human action gradually developed over the next decade, as filmmakers shifted from directly recording "real" scenes (travel shots, vaudeville routines, military parades, and so on) in favor of narrating stories with discrete plots and characters recognizable as such. Ignoring the camera, people stopped posing and learned how to impersonate others, becoming movie actors in effect, while audiences similarly learned how to read and accept these deliberate screen impersonations as "moving and glowing" (literally) representations or "simulacra" of "vital forces," to borrow the words of this early speculation about the future of the new medium.

Even in the case of actualities around the turn of the twentieth century, once the novelty of viewers looking at versions of themselves wore off, impatience quickly set in, and filmmakers sometimes felt the need to make self-consciousness appear motivated, to make it emerge from the particular action on-screen as opposed to stemming simply from the presence of the camera itself. In these instances we have what might be called pseudo-actualities, carefully orchestrated representations of social interaction that disguise signs of the filmmaker's control in order to emphasize the random and the contingent. Unlike other sorts of early cinematic reenactments, which sought to reproduce specific historical events such as Spanish-American War battles or important boxing matches, what is being "faked" here is quotidian reality.

The title of one such shot, Edison's *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City* (1901), for example, suggests an impromptu action caught by happenstance, a particular moment in time, akin to a Lumière street view, but local rather than exotic in its geographical specificity. The camera is set up on the sidewalk along a long diagonal to capture pedestrians who haphazardly pass back and forth in the foreground and cast glances at the camera. One man darts across the camera's field of view, sees the camera, and abruptly reverses course, presumably to avoid spoiling the shot. But the main action depends on a well-timed and presumably well-rehearsed contrivance, as a strolling couple, starting well in the background, gradually come more and more prominently into view, until the woman's ankle-length dress suddenly flies up, hit by a blast of air as she passes over a subway grate a few feet before she reaches the camera.

Clearly, by 1901, neither chance passersby nor invisible forces of nature (wind) were sufficiently entertaining to merit attention; here interest lies in the titillating effects of the wind, the uplifted dress, the woman's exposed legs, her self-conscious laughter, her partner's amusement, the looks they exchange with one another, and the responses of the crowd of bystanders, reactions made all the more exciting by seeming to be spontaneous and unscripted. Yet the woman's plotted embarrassment at being so bodily exposed (like the famous shot of Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch*), intended as the denouement of the film, must compete for our attention with a young boy in a bright white shirt standing midrange left, legs slightly apart, hands behind his back, who throughout the entire scene has stared intently at the lens, transfixed and immobile, like the tall Muscovite in the Lumière street actuality (see fig. 6). Following his piercing look from start to finish, it becomes a bit difficult to focus on the woman. Even after the laughing couple exits the frame, we can still see the motionless boy staring back at us. We have in effect two rival modes of representation, two modes of objectification, two different ways that the boy and the woman each become acutely aware and center themselves—the camera eye outside the shot and the eyes of boyfriend and crowd gazing from within. Trying to have its cake and eat it too, combining the appearance of spontaneous actuality with narrative control, the film ends up showing two dramas instead of one.[37]

Another Edison street scene filmed three years earlier, *Fake Beggar* (1898), patterned after the Lumière brothers' 1896 *Le Faux Cul-de-Jatte* (catalog no. 665), similarly attempts to motivate self-consciousness by simulating spontaneity, with even more complex visual effects. As in *What Happened . . .*, the movie camera is set up on the sidewalk to record the cha-

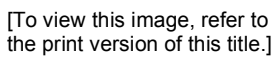

Figure 6. *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City* (1901).

grin that attends daily urban life, but instead of an abashed young woman, her sexuality suddenly on display for all to see, here we ostensibly see a different sort of exposé unfold. Foreground front, a crippled beggar wearing a sign that reads Help the Blind reaches to pick up a coin that has been tossed on the sidewalk next to his hat, just as a policemen arrives to witness the scam. The startled man jumps to his (perfectly fine) feet and tries to run down the street, but is caught as a crowd gathers to watch the apprehension of the faker. A disabled, partial body thus suddenly turns out to be whole. Drawing on vaudeville routines, the film's little joke more deeply registers a common late-nineteenth-century American anxiety about false appearances in the modern city, specifically the suspicion that destitute street beggars could be engaged in shams or role playing intended to dupe unsuspecting almsgivers. If no able-bodied person could reasonably and honestly ask for money, as was frequently assumed (denying high unemployment rates prevalent in the 1890s), then such deception was always to be feared, as various conduct books and urban guides at the time warned.[38]

Like these other texts, the film purports to decipher the illusory semiotics of the city by exposing its false ocular signs to reveal the underlying truth. Yet the film itself becomes a form of deceit, once we realize that the entire scene has been contrived, not spontaneously captured by happenstance. The

almsgiver tosses the errant coin just as two policemen arrive from the other side. Each approaches and flanks the beggar at precisely the same moment, indicating a perfectly timed and choreographed bit of stage business. As opposed to the other spectators on the street, who are simply playing themselves, these three agents of the action are characters who have deliberately taken on the roles of others. In this regard the panhandler is a fake fake beggar, pretending to pretend, so that the moment he is caught, the moment he stands up and runs away, he returns to, and reminds us of, his fully embodied status as a professional impersonator (presumably paid offscreen by Edison, rather than taking the charity of passersby).

Given the movie camera's foregrounding of seeing and surveillance, the imposter's bogus blindness works in similarly complicated ways. A contemporaneous catalog description of the shot stresses how "his eyes stare forth a mute, glassy appeal," so that his all-too-literal Help the Blind placard is analogized (verbally) as a mute appeal—a muteness profoundly shared by early cinema in general (see the interlude). The catalog in effect enhances the senses of, or helps, the blind by curiously imagining a "stare" behind the unseeing eyes, which blocks or masks such a self-conscious look aimed directly at the camera (recall here the blindfolding of Czolgosz). Preventing him from playing to the front, his blindness, in other words, serves as an objective correlative for his lack of self-consciousness. The crowd reveals what the glassy stare would conceal when they repeatedly look back and smile at the lens after the fake blind man is collared. In their spontaneous response, they paradoxically call attention to the material presence of the visual technology for whose benefit this little masquerade has been staged.

In *Fake Beggar* and *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street*, impromptu frontal looks by bystanders who happen to be caught by the camera threaten to undermine each film's premeditated plotting. Both street scenes are curious hybrids, mixing chance crowd response with an early kind of prompted show, closer to visual miming than conventional theater in their muteness. But any clear generic demarcation between actuality and narrative fiction implied here may in fact be ultimately untenable, to the extent that what gets dramatized in these cinematic simulations is the performative dimension of any act of self-presentation. Such self-conscious feigning of self-consciousness tells us little, however, about how the early cinema camera more spontaneously captured people becoming aware of themselves. Hence the distinction I make in *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street* between the staring boy in the white shirt and the woman hired to display embarrassment at her exposed legs. But from the perspective of American social psychologists like Baldwin, even this kind of pretending signifies a

great deal, since, given the theatricality of everyday life, any authentic inner essence of self is less the issue than a person's outward bodily expression (deliberate or otherwise) in relation to others. If we step back in fact and look at the hundreds of actualities made from 1896 to 1900 that feature people, we discover a surprisingly large number where actions and interactions caught on film are neither totally improvised nor fully scripted but, rather, follow established routines, much like the rules of the card game that organized the Lumière actuality.

In the absence of these ordering social routines, early cinema's mingling of "real" and "fictional" scenes sometimes takes on bewildering proportions. In this regard Edwin S. Porter's *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island* (1903) marks something of a conceptual endpoint, if not a chronological one, for this testing of the porous boundaries between watching a movie (as an innocent bystander), being caught up in one (as an inadvertent participant), and acting before the lens (as a professional).[39] For ten minutes Porter's camera follows a pair of stock country-bumpkin figures as they clownishly try their hands at all sorts of shows and group rides, such as shooting the chutes. Set in an open-air entertainment park, the film's emphasis on representing "amusement" of all sorts and at all costs jumps back and forth from unsuspecting customers to the comedic couple (polished vaudevillians) to Coney Island's own showmen. On the one hand, the individual activities that Rube and Mandy enjoy do offer a certain set of familiar guidelines for behavior, even if the couple consistently push their buffoonish bodies against these predetermined limits, repeatedly falling down, stuffing their faces with hot dogs, and so on. But on the other hand, the unstructured environment of the park, clearly less socially regulated than a city street, allows their experience to turn into a confusing exercise approaching chaos at times. The film in effect portrays three kinds of performance, which become increasingly difficult to keep separate: the reaction shots of park patrons in crowds and small clusters, who laugh at the antics of the silly couple, the broad slapstick physical humor of Rube and Mandy themselves, and the various stage acts that the two watch and sometimes aggressively disrupt. While it stands to reason that Porter would center narrative attention on Rube and Mandy—the obvious mediating link between everyday customers and stage professionals—his mobile camera in its quest for amusement is far more promiscuous and indiscriminate than that. It freely roams between various kinds of rival spectacles, from the passersby who view Rube and Mandy as they in turn view showmen to these Coney Island theatrical acts themselves, which Porter assumes would still hold some intrinsic interest for his cinema audience. In this serial watching, with

strolling patrons, comic couple, and park performers all looking at each other as well as directly at the camera on occasion, the borders between actuality and fiction dissolve amid a sea of milling bodies.

In refusing to clearly discriminate between the objects and subjects of spectacle, *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island* harkens back to the earliest Lumière shots that also tended to depict people as undifferentiated masses of moving information. But filmmakers quickly discovered ways to organize these bodies. Consider fire runs, for example, perhaps the single most frequent cinema subject before 1898. Representing the exciting process of getting to a fire, rather than actually fighting it, these actualities at first glance seem to make good on the new technology's claim to capture immediate verisimilitude in moving pictures. Film company catalogue descriptions certainly played up this angle, typically emphasizing "a fire engine in action" (M no. 260) or the "secur[ing] of a very realistic and stirring scene . . . including "magnificent horse effects" (M no. 284) by a film crew that presumably happened, on the spot, to come across the thrilling event as it was transpiring.[40] But newspaper accounts of such filmmaking often tell a different story, indicating that these engines were "passing at full speed to an *imaginary* fire," for example, or simply calling the galloping fire engines "an exhibition run." In other words, there was no real fire at the end of the run. Yet I would insist these performances were *not* staged simply for the benefit of the movie cameras; the firemen, animals, and machines were engaged in the serious task of practicing for a future contingency, an actual fire, and thereby producing spectacular "natural effects" in the process. If these men were trying out parts in front of the lens, these are forms of behavior that anticipate the roles they would be expected to play in the case of a real disaster.[41] On a practical level, it would be easier for the cameras to capture rehearsed events instead of waiting to get lucky and record an actual emergency in progress. But beyond sheer expediency, such films also remind us of the theatricalization of daily life, the "exhibitions" in the street and in vaudeville houses, set against the background of unselfconscious nature (horses, smoke, and fire).

The notion of practice lies at the very heart of many of these early films, especially once we go beyond fire runs to consider sea rescues—water being, after fire, the second great natural subject of early cinema. As in the case of the fire films, these actualities also render persons in the process of rehearsal, going through the motions of saving lives so that they will know what to do when encountering an actual drowning. Although a few of these actualities may try to approximate the real thing, an impression reinforced by hyperbolic catalogue descriptions, many take as a given the movie cam-

era's rendering of rehearsal or, as one description aptly reads, "the exact routine pursued in actual practice" (M no. 414). Beyond fire runs and water rescues depicted in early films, we might note the ambulance runs and the large number of military exercises, marches, and drills of various kinds—that is, men preparing for war: yet another example of this process of mimetic self-rehearsal. In all these cases, as a kind of microcosm of the social imitation that Tarde and Baldwin examined, moving bodies come together in order to engage in a series of coordinated, repetitious actions. These films remind us that theories offered at the turn of the twentieth century about the social genesis of the self emerged in conjunction with motion picture technology itself. By attending to the "actual practice" of persons caught by the camera—solitary figures in the throes of embarrassment; small groups interacting, posing, and watching themselves being watched; and masses engaged in anticipatory collective routines—we gain a greater appreciation of how early cinema objectified selfhood and visualized self-consciousness.

Interlude: The Vocal Gesture

Sounding the Origins of Cinema

Cinema is surely one of the most overdetermined of technologies, emerging in the 1890s from a wide array of prior cultural practices. To devise an archaeology of the medium, we can trace a long history of projected moving images, such as magic lantern shows, with the decisive difference residing in cinema's photographic realism. Or if we choose to emphasize cinema's grounding in still photography, the key distinction becomes motion itself. Another lineage links cinema to stage, contrasting the presence of live theater to the disembodied virtuality of the screen. Even as they offer different points of departure, all three of these genealogies seem self-evident and mutually reinforcing, focused as they are on the visual aspects of film.[1] After all, what else is there?

To help explain cinema's beginnings, I propose in this chapter a fourth context, one less obvious if not downright counterintuitive: nineteenth-century studies of sound and sound reproduction. I do not make the customary argument for the importance of sound as an accompaniment to the moving picture from cinema's inception; my stronger claim is that auditory culture, including methods of recording—particularly the phonograph—and notions about the origins of speech and song, actively shaped how and what kind of early cinema images were made, as well as how audiences learned to perceive them. In certain crucial instances centering on representations of face and voice, the picture may be considered to supplement sound, not vice versa.

As revisionist film historians frequently point out, the very concept of a silent cinema is a teleological fallacy imposed after the fact, since the silent movies were never silent. Such a commonplace has provoked its own sort of revision, an indispensable account by Rick Altman that surveys the soundscape of the era, including stage music, slide show lectures, illustrated songs,

special effects, vaudeville performances, and numerous synchronization schemes, all to demonstrate that sound was a far more varied (and occasionally intermittent) phenomenon in relation to early film than previously supposed.[2] Altman's main focus is on American exhibition practice, the multitude of sounds that surrounded the showing of motion pictures before the talkies. But he says relatively little about early cinema's visualization of sound, which is my concern—that is, how sound was imagined to be anchored, to invoke, or to be invoked by the moving image itself. To this end, I concentrate here on a trio of early films made at key moments of transition—*Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze, January 7, 1894* (1894), *The May Irwin Kiss* (1896), and *The Big Swallow* (1901)—which all foreground the mouth and the kinetics of vocalization to produce striking audiovisual effects.

The audiovisual as a unified field of study has an interesting archaeology of its own. Starting in the late seventeenth century, various philosophers such as John Locke (1689), George Berkeley (1709), and Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1754) produced treatises on sensation, including some speculation on sensory convergence.[3] Denis Diderot, for instance, became enamored of a famous harpsichord whose notes produced various colors (an instrument ridiculed by Voltaire).[4] Enlightenment epistemology spurred interest in empirically investigating the senses, particularly hearing and seeing, both in isolation and in relation to one another, with the idea that one sense could help explain the other. As Jonathan Sterne has argued, the quest to make sounds visible became something of an obsession for nineteenth-century scientists.[5] Pioneering the physics of acoustics, Thomas Young and Ernest Chladni developed ways to graphically render sonic vibration, turning sound effectively into a kind of writing, although it was not until the invention of the phonograph in 1877 that "fugitive" sounds, as Thomas Edison called them, could be preserved and played back.[6] A second sort of effort at audiovisual hybridity rested less on recording technologies themselves than on analogies about them, such as a surmise by the French photographer Felix Nadar, in 1856, concerning a "Daguerréotype acoustique" that could capture sound just as the camera captured images—a device he rechristened "phonographe" in 1864, a full decade before the machine (with the same name) actually materialized.[7] Beyond the impressive accuracy of Nadar in predicting Edison's invention, or the sheer frequency with which these sorts of analogies based on inscribing the senses pop up throughout the nineteenth century, this sort of technological audiovisuality is striking for basing perceptual integration on the model of the unified human body.

It should come as no surprise, then, that when he began seriously to con-

sider developing motion pictures, Edison in effect returned Nadar's favor via an analogy of his own in his famous first patent caveat of October 1888: "I am experimenting upon an instrument which does for the Eye what the phonograph does for the Ear, which is the recording and reproduction of things in motion, and in such a form as to be both Cheap practical and convenient."[8] Rather than conceiving his device as an instrument of sight, along the lines of a camera, Edison from the start channeled it through sound, tying it to his own previous invention. Even though the camera was obviously capable of serving as a model for recording and reproduction, the rhetoric of a patent caveat dictated that a new design appear unique in as many ways as possible. Yet given his insistence on "Cheap practical and convenient," Edison's failure to mention photography (a deliberate suppression) is still revealing, since the portable Kodak was introduced in May of that very year, a gadget certainly easier to use than his phonograph. So why emphasize sound? That fleeting sounds somehow correspond to "things in motion," as opposed to, say, stationary objects, is perhaps plausible in implying temporality, but not so readily apparent. Edison's comparison between Eye and Ear (which he repeated over and over again) goes well beyond loose metaphor, moreover, when we get past this opening sentence of the caveat, as few people do, to read the next two: "This apparatus I call a Kinetoscope 'Moving View[.]' In the first production of the actual motions that is to say of a continuous Opera."[9] Addressing what the device does, what it is called, and what it will record and reproduce, in his very first mention of the new medium's contents Edison curiously alludes not to speeding trains or racing horses but rather to the grand multimedia spectacle of the nineteenth century.

Edison's somewhat cryptic reference to "continuous Opera" is far from a casual remark. From this point on, until the actual commercial deployment of the kinetoscope six years later, in dozens and dozens of publicity interviews in newspaper after newspaper across the country, Edison continued to emphasize more than anything else the ability of the apparatus to visually render human song and speech, "the lips of the orator" as one of the earliest articles (1890) put it, or "each little muscle of the singer's face" as Edison himself proclaimed in another (1891).[10] While opera and oratory might have lent the new technology a certain cultural cachet, there is more to it than that.[11] Months prior to Edison's issuance of his first caveat, during a meeting in early 1888 the photographer Eadweard Muybridge proposed a joint venture by which Edison "could produce with his instrument the tones of the voice while he would furnish the gestures and facial expression."[12] Clearly it is the phonograph that dictates the choice of visual subject matter

for Muybridge, who was more used to capturing animal locomotion than the lips of politicians or singers. Where sight and sound most powerfully intersect, Muybridge understood, is precisely the human face.[13]

What Edison himself may have had in mind can partially be explained by a material change in the device's design itself that shows up in his fourth motion picture caveat of November 1889: "The break wheel which controls the polarized relay may be connected to the screw shaft of the phonogh hence there will be a positive connection & all the movements of a person photoghd will be exactly coincident with any sounds made by him."[14] With the addition of this "positive connection," we no longer have an analogy between Eye and Ear but rather a "compound motion and sound reproducer," which is quite another matter, a "dual" machine that was praised mainly for being "an improvement on the phonographs now in common use."[15] Conceiving of sight and sound as simultaneous and merged in fact works against analogy, which depends upon and respects difference. And lest we think that Edison is simply trying to breathe new life into a previous invention that had not yet fully caught on as a musical entertainment device (he is indeed trying to do that), it is important to note that, from the very start, the phonograph immediately conjured up the prospect of the visual, as the editors of the prestigious journal *Scientific American* concluded when Edison initially showed the machine to them in 1877: "It is already possible by ingenious optical contrivances to throw stereoscopic photographs of people on screens in full view of an audience. Add the talking phonograph to counterfeit their voices, and it would be difficult to carry the illusion of real presence much further."[16]

Scientific American seems to have hit the nail on the head. In one of the very first accounts of the phonograph to be published, the central issue is not the invention's reproduction of sound, endlessly repeatable, but rather "the illusion of real presence"—a presence grounded in the whole human form. In other words, that illusion is best sustained by combining hearing and sight, not separating them from one another. As Tom Gunning has argued, following Jonathan Crary, cinema arrived at the tail end of a century progressively devoted "to tak[ing] the human sensorum apart in order to examine and master each separate strand of the senses."[17] To mark one beginning for this complex historical process, we could cite Diderot's unnerving 1751 thought experiment "to decompose a man, so to speak, and to examine what he derives from each of the senses with which he is endowed. . . . It would be amusing to get together a society, each member of which should have no more than one sense."[18] But as this example suggests, the notion of a unilateral historical progression toward atomizing the senses

is a bit misleading, since part of the impetus for pulling things apart is then to see how they can fit back together, the "society" of the handicapped that Diderot imagines forming (and perhaps presiding over as philosopher).

As *Scientific American* intuited, in its disembodied reproduction of speech the new media of the phonograph and telephone (1876) threatened to sever the human voice from its origins, a divorce that the still newer medium of the kinetoscope presumed to combat by restoring the illusion of presence, reuniting the imaged body, more specifically the face and mouth, with alienated speech and song. Yet it is not simply the case that one new medium can function to compensate for a lack in another, since moving picture technology from the start entailed its own isolating tendencies. It is more fruitful to consider sight and sound media as being dialectical, including sometimes being in tension with one another. Hence Edison's own insistence on the compound audiovisual nature of his device, which with its single drive shaft's "positive connection" (like a diacritical hyphen itself) was called a Kineto-Phonograph by Edison's colleague W. K. L. Dickson, who stressed its "comprehensive" capacity.[19] Only such an apparatus integrating the senses could do justice to "continuous Opera," a resonant concept that served figuratively as Edison's best approximation for the full range of human experience, sound, and motion everywhere and always, however artificially contrived.[20]

The operatic illusion of sensory wholeness Edison hoped his invention could engender corresponds to what film theorist André Bazin would famously call "the myth of total cinema," a dream of perfect verisimilitude subsequently derided by Noël Burch as a bourgeois nightmare akin to Frankenstein's pieced-together monster.[21] Neither exactly utopian nor nightmarish, another trope that George Parsons Lathrop invoked to publicize the as-yet-untested new technology suggests a third way to understand its audiovisual potential. Edison's intended collaborator on a science-fiction romance that never was completed, Lathrop in an 1891 *Harper's Weekly* article came up with a conceit worthy of a fantasy novelist (perhaps Mark Twain?): "The last of our illustrations represents the twin instruments ready to work side by side in a brotherly, harmonious way, and with what seems almost a conscious intelligence. The original and unique birth of one brain, they are linked as closely as the Siamese Eng and Chang, not by a band of flesh, but by a bar of steel, viz., the shaft that rotates the phonograph cylinder (on the right of the table), and is also connected with the strip and shutter mechanism of the kinetograph, enclosed in a box on the left of the table."[22] First endowing the apparatus (almost) with its own consciousness, next admitting that the ghost in the machine is really simply the "one

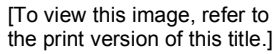

Figure 7. *Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze, January 7, 1894* (1894).

brain" of his genius friend Edison, Lathrop then settles on a comparison to Siamese twins. Unlike Frankenstein's unnatural Creature, this twin metaphor (barely) sustains the organicism of the device (despite the steel bar) but implicitly calls attention to its freakish qualities. Sight and sound may come together in a single body, but it will not necessarily be very pretty.

Little wonder, then, that when we begin to examine the first films produced by Edison's kinetoscope, the results can be a bit unsettling, especially when it comes to the rendering of the human mouth in action. It would be foolish for me to insist that early cinema was focused primarily on face and voice, but a surprising number of important films do seek to render the biomechanics of vocalization. Here *Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze, January 7, 1894* (1894), better known simply as *Fred Ott's Sneeze,* remains a most compelling case (see fig. 7). Published as a sequence of frame enlargements in a number of magazines announcing the invention on the eve of its commercial debut, the film was never actually shown in public. But its images, discussed extensively at the time, crucially suggest some of the new medium's aspirations and limitations. Instead of grand Wagnerian opera, we get low comedy, a spasmodic head twisted in contortion: "The facial distortion is the farce of the sneeze," as one commentator put it.[23]

Linda Williams has remarked on the erotic implications of the film, a kind of orgasmic release that was originally supposed to be performed by a young girl.[24] But *performed* is precisely the wrong word, since although a sneeze can be induced, it is done to you, not by you. I am therefore most interested in the involuntary, automaton-like quality of Ott's seizure, a body (from the waist up) and head and mouth in the throes of violent motion over which he has no control. In this sense the humor of the sneeze seems to confirm Henri

Bergson's well-known 1900 analysis of laughter: "The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine."[25] Uncanny too that, as the breath is forcefully expelled, Ott's eyes close, turning inward away from the gaze of the movie camera. Stressing the scientific value of such a demonstration, the *Harper's Weekly* commentator analyzes nine distinct phases of the filmed sneeze, celebrating the "curious gamut of grimace and sound the kinetoscope has exactly scored," a verb usually reserved for musical inscription. He continues with an analogy that echoes Edison's own famous Eye-Ear caveat: "As there is the partially unseen; so there is undoubtedly the partially unheard."[26]

This is an odd remark, considering that earlier in the article he noted that "the phonograph as an accompanist sounds the precise 'as-shew.' " Given the conventionalized sound of a sneeze, what do we not hear? "Unheard" perhaps works as in the Keats couplet "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/Are sweeter" to suggest the power of the imagination over the senses. In this regard Ott's sneeze enables Edison to hedge his bets, coupling a moving image with an automatic and all too familiar sound, which might be played together if his audiovisual business model succeeded for joint phonographic and kinetoscopic exhibition parlors, but which would also be comprehensible (unlike words) if the noise ended up coming out of Ott's visible open mouth in imagination only.[27] Had Ott said something, it could have meant anything, but a sneeze is a sneeze is a sneeze. One reason we have no trouble conjuring up the sound is that the contorted facial motion and its acoustic counterpart are simultaneously triggered by a single physiological source, joined at the hip, as it were, like Eng and Chang. The body, not the apparatus, provides synchronization.

I call what Ott produces noise instead of sound because in some ways a sneeze is as far removed from speech as possible. In an extraordinary meditation, the philosopher David Appelbaum seeks to restore the body to voice by moving away from speech as mere meaning to consider the visceral, affective, intimate, and proprioceptive aspects of human utterance. Appelbaum objects to the assumption that the voice is merely the transparent means to articulate thought. For example he sets the spoken word against the cough, which he calls the body's "punctuation mark"—a "spasmodic expulsion of sound" or "interjection" that interrupts communication and rattles philosophy's life of the mind, which has sought to suppress the shock of corporeal experience for the sake of ideal truth. As he wittily remarks, "Truth is the ultimate cough syrup."[28] Yet I would name the sneeze (which he briefly mentions) an even more effective challenge to meaning than the

embodied "rings," "barks," and "whoops" that he discusses, since, as I suggested above, its fitful automatism emerges deep within the body and cannot be feigned or even willed. In this regard it is a less human sound than the cough (and certainly than speech), rendering us presumably closer to an animal state than to Bergson's notion of a machine.

Theologians and philosophers for centuries pondered the dividing line between humans and animals, invariably invoking language and its origins to demarcate the domain of the human. Such speculation on the emergence of speech, gesture, and voice often relied on loose comparisons between eye and ear (pace Edison), but in Jonathan Ree's crucial insight, "differences between vision and hearing have nothing much to do with the relations of gestural communication to speech."[29] Seeking the ancient roots of language in nature, Francis Bacon (1605) likened corporeal gestures to "transitory Hieroglyphics," fleeting visible signs at once analogous to, but also seemingly prior to, speech and writing.[30] This compelling notion of primitive humans as living hieroglyphics whose bodies in action were meant to be read persisted for well over a century, when Condillac and Diderot in the 1740s and 1750s imagined the body as the spring of a primordial poetry. Condillac, for example, posited dancing as the source of language, tumultuous, vibrant movements that allowed for the simultaneous expression of a multitude of emotions. In a second stage of development, Condillac reasoned, these urgent gestures became attached to articulated sounds, leading to communicative speech, gaining conventionalized clarity but losing passionate (and poetic) immediacy and intensity. As his friend Rousseau saw, however, the circularity of Condillac's theory of a corporeal "language of action" begged paradoxical questions, since any appeal to prelinguistic gestures leading to speech must already suppose rational social intercourse as a precondition.[31]

By the mid-nineteenth-century, biology seemed to matter more than speculative psychology in accounting for the genesis of language. In *The Descent of Man* (1871), for instance, Darwin claimed that human speech originated in the mating calls of animals, taking issue with an earlier conjecture of Herbert Spencer's that impassioned speech arose from music.[32] Combining evolutionary theory with cultural anthropology, physiology, and linguistics, Wilhelm Wundt near the end of the century began to elaborate an ambitious theory linking thought, feeling, and corporeal experience under the signifying system of gesture—part of his larger pioneering work in physiological psychology, as I discussed in chapter 2.[33] For Wundt, language evolved from a set of emotional states underlying a set of innate expressive actions that he sought to codify and classify in minute detail,

what one follower calls the "psychophysics of expression."[34] Unlike Darwin, whose *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) argued for an unbroken continuity between the natural world and the human world,[35] Wundt held out for a distinctly human signifying practice. Seeking to define a grammar and a syntax of the body, as opposed to mere pantomime, he devoted chapters to analyzing what the particular hand gesticulations and facial motions denoted in various cultures, primitive and modern. In its own awkward efforts to reunite sight and sound, mouth and voice, early cinema's "continuous Opera," however unintentionally, seemed to rehearse these various debates about the origins of speech and language, particularly on the primacy of gesture as the basis for communication.

In arguing for a language of gesture, Wundt analyzed at great length deafness and the signing practice of deaf-mutes. From Bacon to Leibniz to William James to Wittgenstein, in fact, deafness remained a crucial foundational ground on which to test various propositions about the relation between thought and language. People do think without words, James believed—though he did not quite understand how—citing the autobiographical memoirs of the deaf-mute Melville Ballard, an affirmative speculation that Wittgenstein in turn would subsequently question.[36] Musing along these lines two centuries earlier, Diderot in his "Letter on the Deaf and Dumb" (1751) posited a "theoretical mute" and conjectured how one would go about conversing with him by gestures Diderot imagined to have a natural syntax.[37] From a more practical perspective, starting in the 1700s the education of deaf-mutes became a central concern, leading to more than a century's competition between two main kinds of pedagogical strategies. One approach insisted deaf-mutes learn how to talk. Pioneered by Alexander Graham Bell's father, "Visible Speech" (yet another audiovisual coinage), for example, was a method using an elaborate alphabet to intricately reproduce the sounds made by the human vocal chords, with the face acting as the slate upon which speech is marked. The other approach sought more abstractly to develop signing, a full language of physical gesture that was exclusively visual and did not try to simulate speaking at all. To the detriment of deaf-mutes for decades to come, an 1880 Milan conference of prominent educators effectively banned the teaching of sign language in favor of Bell's Visible Speech and other similar systems of phonetic transcription.[38]

With the ascendancy of oralists over manual signers, deaf education increasingly focused on the minute particulars of vocalization, which is where early cinema again comes in. During 1891–92, precisely when Edison was giving interview after interview about his kinetoscope's potential to capture the detailed facial expressions of orators and opera singers, Georges

Demenÿ in France began to employ his own new moving picture technology as a means to help the deaf read lips. Based on a very familiar analogy ("the expression of physiognomy will be presented as the voice is preserved by the phonograph"), the Phonoscope played back for deaf students sequences of close-up images of Demenÿ himself repeating with exaggerated clarity the phrases "Je vous aime" and "Vive la France!"[39] Leaving aside (for now) the interesting content of these phrases, the impetus for Demenÿ's experimentation seems to have had two sources. A close colleague of Étienne-Jules Marey, Demenÿ regarded his attempt to visually break down the act of speaking into component features as a more narrowly focused counterpart to Marey's laboratory efforts to analyze and freeze motion via stop-action chronophotography, as I noted in my introduction. Along less scientific lines, Demenÿ's interest in the movements of face and mouth also seems indebted to the "speaking portraits" exhibited in Berlin by Ottomar Anschütz in January 1890: a series of intimate shots of upper-class citizens intended as a kind of family album for entertainment purposes.[40]

Demenÿ's venture in the education of the deaf was something of a bust, however, as he himself acknowledged: "But the experiment was not entirely successful, because the sentence being pronounced was not completely photographed; it was interrupted without our knowledge. The deaf-mute realized it immediately and was not guided by the general meaning of the sentence which would have allowed him to guess the parts that remained in doubt."[41] He thus blames the failure on the imperfections of chronophotography, rather than on the Phonoscope or the experiment's very design. But his allusion to "the general meaning of the sentence" implicitly confirms Ferdinand de Saussure's subsequent skeptical remark (with perhaps Demenÿ in mind) that "it would be impossible to provide detailed photographic acts of speaking *[parole]*, the pronunciation of even the smallest word represents an infinite number of muscular movements that could be identified and put into graphic form only with great difficulty."[42] For Saussure, capturing talk is not only impractical but also largely irrelevant to linguistics, given his privileging of meaning's general structure. As Saussure understood, analyzing language *(langue)* depended less on phonetics than phonemes, a conventionalized system of differential units, not the material set of noises issuing from the mouth.

Such efforts to visualize the voice by Edison, Demenÿ, Anschütz, and others were relatively short-lived, as filmmakers came to realize the truth, which Vachel Lindsay summarized years later: "Moving objects, not moving lips, make the words of the photoplay."[43] As sound synchronization proved to be elusive, films would come to emphasize the body in motion for motion's

sake by focusing on subjects such as acrobats, boxers, and fencers—although we can note even in this latter instance a lingering fascination with the animated face as the basis for the illusion of real presence, "the quick flash of the eye, the tension of the mouth, the dilated nostril and the strong, deep breathing give evidence of the potentialities within."[44] As late as 1895, the same year that the Lumière brothers commercially launched projected motion pictures, W. K. L. Dickson was still referring to the "Kineto-Phonograph," Edison was still reiterating how his machine would record life-size facial expressions of artists performing at the Metropolitan Opera House and continue to exhibit them long after the artists' deaths, and newspapers covering Edison were still anticipating "Opera at Home" as a "living reality" just around the corner.[45]

In fact the decisive introduction of large-scale projection, as opposed to Edison's peephole device, helped revive the fascination with rendering speech, as least in one important case. The same week that the first American projection apparatus premiered in New York at Koster & Bial's Music Hall on April 23, 1896, Edison made what would turn out to be his company's most popular film of the entire year, *The May Irwin Kiss*. It could be reasonably inferred that this fifteen-second movie was originally intended for the Vitascope debut but was delayed by a week.[46] That *The May Irwin Kiss* was made specifically for the Vitascope is crucial for understanding its tremendous sensation, which depended on two closely related characteristics of the new technology of projection: first, its magnification of the human body, particularly the face and mouth, and second, its collective exhibition in front of hundreds of spectators at once. Such vaudeville venues encouraged boisterous group response, the beginning of what Miriam Hansen has described as early cinema's formation of a counterpublic sphere.[47]

The first public "showing" of *The May Irwin Kiss* was actually not onscreen but rather in a newspaper. To help drum up interest in the vitascope, the *New York World* arranged for Mary Irwin and John C. Rice to come to Edison's Black Maria studio to pose before his movie camera, still called a "kinetoscope" by the newspaper. The two were brought in to perform a scene from the final act of *The Widow Jones*, a farcical musical comedy that they had appeared in, in New York the previous fall (starting September 1895). Although we might expect song, the musical's reenacted climax was a few lines of dialogue followed by a prolonged and ostentatious kiss. In its Sunday supplement (April 26, 1896), the *World* published a nearly full-page spread on the filming, a news event in its own right, which it titled "The Anatomy of a Kiss." This headline was followed by a detailed description, including in the middle of the page four strips of what it dubbed "winks"—that is, pho-

tographic frame reproductions (unusual for a newspaper at the time)—as well as, at each corner, four larger, captioned pen-and-ink illustrations that traced the sequence of gestures (mustache twirling, hesitating, snuggling) leading to the climatic moment. Claiming that "what the camera did not see in the kiss did not exist," the newspaper writer (one Mrs. McGuirk) seemed to know when to quit, focusing more on the act of filming than on the kiss itself, "too blissful for adjectives" as the last caption announced. Akin to the press on *Fred Ott's Sneeze*, the journalist offers a kind of tongue-in-cheek analysis of the scientific value of the kinetoscope's minute temporal segmentation of the pair's facial movements, concluding: "Six hundred different phases of a kiss leave little to the imagination."[48]

However striking its layout design combining word and image, the newspaper account could hardly contend with the subsequent showing of the film itself. Nor could the stage version really compete, for that matter, at least in its rendering of this particular charged moment. Musser has shown how the disembodied virtuality of the early cinema screen enabled viewers to enjoy certain spectacles such as passion plays and boxing matches that otherwise remained off limits for being all too carnal.[49] In the case of *The May Irwin Kiss*, I argue, perhaps counterintuitively, that such virtuality is enhanced by the moving image's projection and consequent magnification of the human form. This is the aspect of the film that provoked a powerful collective response, as contemporaneous notices suggest: "In the kinetoscope one person at a time peeps into a hole and sees a tiny moving picture, while in the vitascope the picture is shown upon a screen and shines forth . . . life-size, so that the entire audience can see the picture at once. . . . The life-like reality of the pictures is said to be startling. . . . The changing expression of their faces [Irwin and Rice], their graceful movements, the play of hand and lip and eye, are said to be faultlessly reproduced."[50]

Equating *life size* with *lifelike*, the writer praises a "play of hand and lip and eye" that however disembodied, unlike in live theater, seems to correspond more closely to the animated faces of the spectators sitting in their seats. Big-screen images, especially head shots, invited viewers to recognize themselves. This sort of early cinema identification was driven by corporeal resemblance, rather than by the psychic mechanisms of projection that apparatus theorists in the 1970s postulated for Hollywood spectatorship.

Another contemporaneous newspaper notice more explicitly emphasizes the importance of human scale by contrasting the experience of watching the film with the "real scene" of the musical: "The hit of the show, so far as marvelous lifelike effects and mirthful results with the audience go, was the amusing, much-prepared for kiss—the May Irwin kiss from 'The Widow

Jones.' In this the effects were wonderful. The figures were so large that one could almost tell by the motion of the lips what Rice was saying to Irwin and what Miss Irwin was replying. The facial expression was the widow to a T, and ditto Rice, and the real scene itself never excited more amusement than did its vitascopic presentment, and that is saying much."[51] Size does matter, especially when the motions of the lips are concerned—the imagined speech act calling forth the audience's own ardent vocalizations, as a third account notes: "Their [Rice's and Irwin's] smiles and glances and expressive gestures, and the final joyous, overpowering, luscious osculation was repeated again and again, while the audience fairly shrieked and howled approval."[52] A quintessentially social act on-screen triggered an equally shared response in the vaudeville hall.

Clearly the great appeal of the film rested not simply on the amplification of the actors' expressive faces but also on the erotic spark between them. The picture opened up the prospect of a kind of voyeuristic intimacy for early cinema audiences, who were liberated in public to voice their pleasure, in effect spurring on the virtual kissing couple as the clip was shown over and over again. Yet the film's intimacy can be exaggerated, since we may recall that Edison's vitascope here is reproducing a bit of stage business, well rehearsed and already well known to its viewers. The very familiarity of the scene, in fact, gave its audiences the safety and comfort to respond so vociferously as a group, although it must be said that a few viewers did morally object to the kiss as a disgusting display of physical vulgarity, "magnified to Gargantuan proportions and repeated three times over."[53] The musical's fame also might help explain why most audiences seemed delighted (rather than frustrated, as I am) to "almost" be able to read the couple's lips as a deaf-mute might, presumably since some already knew by heart this particular bit of dialogue leading up to the moment "too blissful for adjectives." The kiss in *The May Irwin Kiss* (the first in a long cinematic tradition) boldly embodied Demenÿ's recited "je vous aime," nature's language of desire, but not in so many words and, therefore, with less ambiguity than its anticipatory discourse.[54]

One reason it is so difficult to read their lips is that, as they speak, their bodies are squished together (like the Siamese twins Eng and Chang?) in a gesture of preliminary snuggling, to borrow the *World*'s term, suggesting that the film's sight and imagined sound are supplemented by another sense, touch. A close reading of their motions, in fact, reveals just how awkwardly their bodies are comported, especially Irwin's. In chapter 2, I discussed how in Lumière actualities the figures on-screen often self-consciously divide their attention between action taking place within the frame and the camera

pointed at them from outside the frame. Here too Irwin and Rice seem unsure whether they are talking directly to themselves or to the Edison apparatus (and thus to the audience that will eventually see the projected images). The lovers recite their lines not face to face, but rather with their heads twisted and pressed together outward at a thirty-degree angle (see fig. 8). Of course when they actually kiss, they turn toward one another and close their eyes, effectively shutting out the audience. The question then becomes, what is the relation between their talking and their kissing? Is the kiss simply a culmination or extension of their dialogue, passionate words flowing naturally from a single source to the physical sign of affection? Does this point to the value of the widow's "big mouth," as reported by McGuirk, who quotes Irwin as explaining, "I can talk to you out of one corner and you can kiss me on the other"?[55] Or perhaps the kiss is instead an action of the lips that positively arrests speech, "stop[s] the mouth" as Benedict wonderfully puts it in *Much Ado about Nothing*, seeking at the close of the play to silence the witty banter of his mate, Beatrice.[56] Shakespeare's kiss makes such verbal wit no longer necessary.

In a 1901 treatise on the matter, *The Kiss and Its History*, a professor of romance philology offered his own anatomy, an erudite survey of global literature, folklore, and custom. After defining and classifying various kinds of kisses (erotic, affectionate, ceremonial, and so on), Christopher Nyrop turns to the thorny problem of origins, asking, "How can a trivial movement of the lips interpret our most innermost feelings in so eloquent a way that there is not a language which has at its command words approaching to it in argumentative power?"[57] In so emphasizing the contrast between verbal intercourse and nonverbal gesture, Nyrop locates the source of such power, a bit surprisingly, in the three robust senses other than the audiovisual—touch, smell, and taste—surmising that the intense sensual gratification of the kiss stems in effect from the primitive urge to eat (if not entirely swallow) the beloved. However intriguing, Nyrop's speculation rests on a basic confusion about the nature of the self—that is, whether the kiss expresses an individual's innermost emotion or is a form of argument, or persuasion, taking place between people. A few years later the American social psychologist George Herbert Mead sought to resolve precisely this muddle, arguing for the social genesis of selfhood.

Central to Mead's thinking is the concept of the vocal gesture. Building on Darwin and Wundt but also radically revising them, Mead regards the gesture as a supremely communicative act, a shared language rather than an articulation of inner thought or feeling. Mead prefers the adjective *vocal* over *verbal* because, like Darwin and Appelbaum, he wants to preserve the

[To view this image, refer to the print version of this title.]

Figure 8. *The May Irwin Kiss* (1896).

voice as corporeal, material, natural, and social all at once, and so his illustrations come mainly from the animal kingdom: bird calls and dogfights. For Mead, Wundt's notion of codified gesture was flawed by an incomplete parallelism between inner psychology and outer physiology similar to the troubling dualism Rousseau detected in Condillac's theory about the origins of language. Insisting on a more unified gestalt, Mead tries to imagine the overall set of "attitudes" two barking dogs might assume as they encounter one another and square off to scrap. These attitudes are fluid and dynamic, because the dogs are not only posturing for each other but also are aware of themselves doing so and therefore participate in a kind of mutual information feedback loop, each dog constantly monitoring and modifying its behavior on the basis of what it perceives the other to be doing.[58] It may seem like a stretch to compare a dogfight to the filmed interaction between Rice and Irwin, but Mead's analysis of the vocal gesture applies perfectly to the preliminary reciprocal adjustments caught by the camera and noticed by audiences that culminated in the cinematic kiss. Precisely to the extent that we are undistracted by the meaning of their words, the moving lips of the couple reinforce the expressive actions of their bodies, the "conversation of gestures" that Mead sees as the basis of sociality.

But why does Mead need the term *vocal* at all; why not simply claim physical gesture (as Wundt did) as the foundation for language? For both barking dogs and conversing humans, feedback loops demand constant awareness, and in terms of the senses this requires that they not only see each other but hear each other as well. Given the placement of the eyes in the front of the head, we can see our bodies only incompletely; because we get only a partial view of ourselves as others see us, Mead believes we rely on the ears to pick up what the eyes cannot during the continuous action of communication, the very shaping of the self as a social being. At the risk of

valorizing hearing as a theological medium of presence (as opposed to sight), Mead imagines that when we speak or make a vocal gesture "we can hear ourselves talking, and the import of what we say is the same to ourselves as it is to others."[59] Hearing functions as a monitoring mirror without the actual need for one, enabling self-consciousness and consciousness of others as a simultaneous process (in fact virtually one and the same thing for Mead).[60] Even though as cinema viewers we fully see May Irwin and John Rice, they themselves need not entirely see each other's faces, pressed together at an angle, precisely to the degree that they can hear each other, even though they remain inaudible to us. Hence the importance of their talking before the kiss, two sorts of oral interaction that differ markedly but are logically linked.

Even as it treats sound as a kind of expressive action, Mead's concept of the vocal gesture disavows the sort of easy analogy between Eye and Ear that Edison famously proclaimed. For Mead, the ear actually does what the eye cannot do. Instead of working together or in parallel, sight and sound in the early moving image sometimes operate at cross purposes or even begin to rival one another, such as in a famous moment in Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) when the lunar face is released to speak only after it has been stabbed in the eye by the voyagers' rocket. We can best appreciate this competition by closely examining *The Big Swallow* (1901), a British gag film made by James Williamson. Showing a solitary man facing the camera, the movie seems to harken back to the initial examples of "speaking portraits" made a decade earlier by Anschütz, Demenÿ, and Dickson, the latter of whom, in 1891, produced an experimental film of himself greeting Edison.[61]

My previous two examples of Edison's vocal gesture shots—*Fred Ott's Sneeze* (1894) and *The May Irwin Kiss* (1896)—indisputably belong to pivotal moments of transition, marking respectively the introduction of the very first commercial (kinetoscopic) motion pictures and, two years, later the transformation from kinetoscope to projected cinema. The year 1901 represents less a turning point in the history of film institutions and more a change in film form, specifically narrative. While most early cinema historians would put 1901 squarely in the midst of the "attractions" period—to use Tom Gunning's now orthodox formulation—I see no reason why a trick film like *The Big Swallow* cannot also tell a story, and a rather complicated allegorical one at that.[62] In the case of this film, as well as of other films by Williamson and his countrymen Robert Paul and George Albert Smith, visual spectacles of attraction and modes of narrative integration are not mutually exclusive binary oppositions, but rather they reciprocally reinforce one another in striking ways, starting around 1901.

[To view this image, refer to the print version of this title.]

Figure 9. *The Big Swallow* (1901).

The Big Swallow is a three-shot narrative that in the space of one minute (to mix metaphors) puts four kinds of media into complex play: writing, still photography, speaking, and moving pictures. A gentleman looks up from reading a book to directly address the camera. He tucks the book inside his coat pocket and begins to stride toward us, clearly disturbed, his lips moving frenetically in angry complaint. As he comes closer, violently waving his cane, his open mouth looms larger and larger. Transformed into a gigantic pair of moving lips, the magnified human face so admired by Vitascope audiences five years earlier suddenly takes on an exaggerated grotesqueness (see fig. 9). Soon his yawning orifice completely covers the screen in absolute blackness. Abruptly we cut to the second shot, which shows a still photographer and his clumsy apparatus swallowed up by a big black hole (more accurately, he dives into it after his camera falls in). The third shot resumes the opening perspective, with the gentleman now walking backward, grinning and licking his chops in satisfaction. Nyrop's notion of kissing as a civilized form of eating here gets literalized, no longer a passionate smooch between lovers but an equally passionate gesture of hostility between an individual and the apparatus presumed to be recording him. *The Big Swallow* offers up a charming patent absurdity—how can a camera (motion or still) film itself being consumed? But before addressing it, let us concentrate on how the movie stages its surreal battle between visualization and vocalization.

As Noël Burch interprets it, the film dramatizes class conflict centering on the contested ownership of the image.[63] This is an upper-class gentleman who feels his personal space is being invaded by a crass photographer seeking to turn him into a picture. Even if he is not exactly what was known as "a Kodak fiend" (his equipment is not portable), the camera busybody in shot 2 is nevertheless something of an "amateur photographic pest," as an

1890 *Punch* cartoon labeled the type, a protopaparazzo in need of his comeuppance.[64] The strife pits still photography as a mode of publicity against the book, signifying the inviolate individual, with the gentleman's vigorous vociferation and threatening cane gesticulations being enlisted on behalf of his interrupted privacy. His voice at once expresses and protects his person. Unlike in the case of the recited dialogue in *The May Irwin Kiss*, it is less important in this instance to wonder about the precise things he says, since this is not a filmed bit of preexisting theater, after all.[65] We need simply to register that his lips are working madly to manifest his indignation. It is the sheer gesture of vocalization (to draw on Mead), not its semantic content, that matters most; his speech becomes a weapon menacing the camera eye.

But the man's mouth also seems in turn to be menaced by the camera, which magnetically draws him closer and closer, almost as if against his will. During his approach, for example, at midrange he curiously turns to his side, still talking nonstop, to address somebody or something in front of him but outside the frame. While May Irwin and John Rice turn thirty degrees *toward* the camera to signal their awareness of the audience, this gentleman turns thirty degrees *away* from the camera, as if he were afraid of losing an increasingly uncomfortable staring match. Burch reads his awkward motion, somewhat implausibly to my mind, as anticipating cinema's subsequent prohibition (starting around 1910) against actors looking directly into the lens, consequently breaking the cinematic illusion of mimetic self-sufficiency.[66] But, instead, the gesture outside the frame helps prepare us, a bit, for the second shot.

If the film simply ended with the surreal blackness of a grotesquely magnified mouth, we could rest assured of the camera's obliteration, speech triumphing over sight. This would be a more satisfying ending for us today, surely, but Williamson instead introduces another perspective that reveals a second man behind the apparatus. The second shot is so jarring to us, trained by classical Hollywood narrative, because we take for granted that the solitary gentlemen is being harassed by the omniscient, promiscuous roving eye of the movie camera. But the implied movie eye and the lens of the still camera are not one and the same. Looking (a little desperately?) away in the first shot, the gentleman alerts us that the frame is not all-inclusive, that an outer world exists apart from or behind what the camera allows us to see. Yet by insisting on showing us the moment of swallowing from that outside perspective, in effect turning the photographic pest into another third-person embodied object of vision, Williamson unwittingly admits that the photographic eye, the motion camera at least, is bigger than the pest himself and therefore can never be subsumed by voice. Bringing the photographer

into the moving picture, the second shot offers the prospect of an infinite succession of views, consumed camera after consumed camera, so that any swallowed up perspective will be instantaneously replaced by another, wider one. There is no place to hide, no way to escape being seen, no possibility of completely ingesting or physically incorporating the cinematic apparatus, as the angry man has outrageously attempted to do. Although the backpedaling mock cannibal displays his gustatory pleasure in the third shot, which returns to the film's mode of direct address, his victory is extravagantly nonsensical, as he himself seems to realize with a whimsical (but silent) big smile in the end.

The open-mouthed, mute grin that concludes *The Big Swallow* can usefully mark one sort of limit for early cinema's vocal gestures. Vision wins out over voice; the gentleman has nothing left to say. Inaudible but implied speech, song, and music would continue to be cued directly by figures on the screen as they talked, danced, and played instruments. The hope of reuniting body with voice by way of the moving image seemed to fade, however, giving way to a rich combination of signifying practices during the next two decades of narrative cinema: a universal hieroglyphics of action celebrated by Vachel Lindsay, techniques of analytic editing, facial close-ups encoding a variety of emotions, the conventionalized "eloquent gestures" of actors, written intertitles setting scenes and explaining motives, and a wealth of auditory accompaniments, including complex musical themes and leitmotifs.[67] Occasionally there might be other ways to register human sounds, such as when Parker Tyler brilliantly discerned while viewing an early Sarah Bernhardt movie that (pace G. H. Mead) "visible on her face, alas, is a rapt listening to her own voice."[68] But Edison's dream of a compound apparatus representing a continuous opera of the human senses would have to wait, and waits still.

PART II

Bodies in Space

3 Chasing Film Narrative

A certain kind of early movie, circa 1903: A man, perhaps impatient for something to happen or perhaps reacting to something already happening, begins running. Others follow after him, until all figures exit the frame, one by one. The action is repeated in the next shot, and then again, and then again, shot after shot showing a man and his pursuers running over hill and dale, from one scene to another. The chase proves immensely popular, and so it is imitated or copied or reproduced by other filmmakers, until one sues another for copyright infringement. The legal case raises important questions about the ontology and ownership of the moving image. In this chapter I examine three related modes of repetition—within the shot, between shots, and between films—in order to suggest a somewhat different way to think about narrative in early cinema, with implications for film history more generally. Analyzing patterns of reiteration also lets us appreciate how the human body in motion, projected on-screen, helped early filmmakers and their audiences to master emerging codes of intelligibility.

Most discussions of narration in early cinema center on the concept of continuity: how time and space are organized according to "a logic of the visible" that renders "spatio-temporal and causal relations coherently and consistently."[1] Such relations construct a diegetic unity, or synthetic representation, imagined rather than simply perceived, which is distinct from the reality of the event being filmed. Continuity as such usually refers to spatiotemporal articulation between shots, which is something of a problem, given the fact that before 1901–2 most films (Lumière actualities, Méliès magic tricks, Edison vaudeville routines) were taken in a single shot. It is certainly possible to trace cinematic narration within a single shot, looking at deep staging and composition to locate a plot, in Aristotelian terms, with a beginning, middle, and end. Against the claim that Lumière actualities

offer the eye a spontaneous flood of undifferentiated information, for example, critics have pointed out complex patterns and symmetries that offer closure, while others have shown that these films are structured by diagonal lines of perspective, a technique that has a long tradition in Western painting and photography.[2] Yet narration in this sense depends strictly on concepts of spatial coherence, at the expense of representations of time, which in a single continuous shot can only be real time, the duration of the moment of filming, as opposed to abstracted plots of causality, interrelated events that do not and cannot strictly adhere to the temporal succession between perceived images.[3] D. W. Griffith's parallel editing, for instance, works by a representational logic that allows for a simultaneity of events occurring far apart from one another.

The question thus becomes, how did we get from films made by Lumière and others (starting 1895) to those by Griffith and others (around 1908): how in a matter of twelve or fifteen years did filmmakers and audiences move from cinematic narratives built on spatial coherence and temporal succession to something like the inverse—to narratives that take for granted temporal ellipsis/simultaneity and spatial separation? As my discussion already has suggested, this question entails another: how can we talk about such a transformation without relying entirely on terms such as *continuity* and *shot* that inevitably rest on a teleological set of assumptions imposed after the fact? Insofar as these critical concepts effectively define for us what we already know cinema to be, they run the risk of preventing us from appreciating the complex formal and historical processes by which cinema became so transformed. Contesting an earlier generation of historians who simply treated "primitive" cinema as if it paved the way for subsequent styles and editing techniques, revisionist scholars starting in the late 1970s rejected such evolutionary models of film form. Instead they stressed the disjunctures between early screen practices and what later would become the dominant narrative norms of Hollywood—norms that psychoanalytic theorists like Christian Metz tended to regard as the "essence" or nature of "the cinematic apparatus" itself. Against such assumptions, Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault, as I noted in my introduction, sought to redefine the early years of film as a "cinema of attractions," one that emphasized visual shock and display rather than spectatorial identification and narrative integration.[4] More recently, many historians have explored the emerging medium's complex relation to late-nineteenth-century urban spectacle, seeing early film as one important symptom of modernity more broadly.[5]

From this perspective, it makes greater sense to treat narration in terms

of early cinema's institutional and cultural contexts rather than as a strictly technical issue. The earliest films, these scholars have shown, were relentlessly intermedial, drawing on spectators' foreknowledge of prior cultural forms and practices—newspapers, still photographs, vaudeville routines, and magic lantern shows—as well as the specific cultural content of these precursor practices. While the visual impact of moving pictures might appear startlingly novel, in important aspects cinema from its infancy remained uncannily familiar. As Noël Burch has pointed out, for example, the earliest attempts to produce extended narrative—boxing matches (shot round by round) and passion plays (shot in a sequence of largely static tableaux depicting individual moments from the life and death of Christ)—both depended on their viewers knowing in advance the scenes being rendered on film.[6] Such scenes were transformed into sustained stories by virtue of the spectators' prior understanding. Narrative continuity, predetermined, resided more in their heads, as it were, than in the projected images unfolding before them. Similarly, Charles Musser has demonstrated how exhibitors during these early years of cinema exerted enormous creative control, hiring lecturers to comment on films as they were being shown, and presenting individual films in a certain order to produce certain narrative effects.[7] Carefully arranged to stir up patriotism, a sequence of films about the Spanish-American War (1898), for example, would draw on, and help constitute, already established and still-emerging national paradigms plotting U.S. imperialism.[8]

Contextualizing early cinema's narrative conventions in this way is crucial, but I wonder if this kind of scholarship, so adverse to teleological assumptions, might be prematurely foreclosing a particular kind of formalism that can also contribute to our understanding of film history. In so linking cinema to precursor cultural formations, turning to the past instead of assuming that film must anticipate its future, such projects have the tendency to overlook the process of transition itself: how one sort of cinema turned into another. The emergence of linear narrative in moving pictures clearly cannot be considered natural or inevitable, but the danger of sticking strictly to a hard-line antiteleological stance is that, like Foucault's early conceptualizing of episteme, it may make it difficult to account for change at all, since it prevents one from claiming anything is the start of anything else. If film history cannot be regarded as a continuous succession of episodes that link up neatly with each other to form a coherent story, neither can it be parsed into a series of self-contained conceptual categories ("attractions," "narrative integration") that bear little or no resemblance to each other, like Zeno's Achilles, who never reaches his destination once his movement

becomes chopped up into ever-decreasing units. By focusing on patterns of repetition rather than narrative continuity per se, I propose to examine how a certain group of these early films formally and self-reflexively mark their specific moment in time. Entertaining the possibility that cultural productions such as movies can carry their own history with them, I argue that these films (and their filmmakers) do in effect anticipate the future, and do not necessarily like what they see.

If motion largely defines the distinctive logic of the medium, helping to distinguish moving pictures from other media, then moving pictures that make such movement their primary subject would seem to hold the key for understanding how viewers learned to negotiate the shift from showing to telling. The chase film, "probably the most successful narrative genre from late 1903 through 1906,"[9] borrowed from vaudeville routines, popular stage shows, dime novels, and other forms of mass culture. Elements of chase appear in many other films of the period, such as *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), and arguably appear much earlier in films such as the Lumière brothers' famous single-shot prank, *Arroseur et Arrosé* (1895). But the cinematic chase reaches its purest fulfillment in a series of highly popular films, starting around 1903, basically devoted to depicting the activity of pursuit, which was almost always a group of people chasing after an individual. Certainly there are other sorts of complex multishot film narratives that emerged around the same time as chase movies. But in its self-conscious emptying of content in order to foreground sheer motion, the cinematic chase reveals much about how film could function to sustain narrative.[10]

As Tom Gunning and others have argued, such films constitute "the original truly narrative genre of the cinema,"[11] because in their representation of continuous running they provide viewers with some sort of linearity to follow from one shot to the next. Accounting for the enormous appeal of these films, Gunning emphasizes how serial action shot after shot created a "synthetic space" whereby "character movement to and from off-screen defines the space appearing on the screen as a metonymic part of a larger whole."[12] At the same time that this space is greater than any single shot, the chase's expansive continuity is wholly contained by the action within. As Charles Musser has remarked, "These chase films locate the redundancy within the films themselves as pursuers and pursued engage repeatedly, with only slight variation, in the same activity. Rather than having a lecture explain images in a parallel fashion, rather than having the viewer's familiarity with a story provide the basis for an understanding, chase films created a self-sufficient narrative in which the viewer's appreciation was based chiefly on the experience of information presented within the film."[13]

Demanding little or no foreknowledge, the information conveyed by the cinematic chase resides primarily in repeating motion itself. This repetition of running figures on the screen recalls the repeating mechanism of the earliest cinematic projection devices, as a 1905 film catalog suggests while giving a brief historical sketch of the emerging medium:

> The machines were so constructed that the films ran endlessly upon a rack and through the moving picture mechanism, the new ends of the film having been joined, and it was possible to project a 50-foot film for any length of time by repetition. The number of subjects that were available was small and their variety limited: "Railroad Trains" . . . and other subjects of a similar nature, which ended in no particular climax, made repetition possible. As the art of making moving pictures developed, the number of subjects that were available increased, and there was a gradual development from the picturing of a limited number of sceneries into the invention of story films.[14]

Linking the question of narration to the technology of projection, this catalog description indicates the intimate relation between cinematic representation and repetition in a way that helps us situate the invention of film alongside other nineteenth-century cultural practices such as photography and phonography, all dedicated to "making experience repeatable," to use historian Daniel Boorstin's memorable phrase.[15] In its on-screen repetition of the biomechanics of running, then, the chase serves as a kind of metacommentary dramatizing how the moving picture machine works.

Yet even in its redundancy, the action of the chase accrues meaning, or larger patterns of order, by "slight variation" as well as repetition, as Musser has pointed out. Variation allows the viewer to establish relations between prior and present action; otherwise the story would have "no particular climax" as the 1905 catalog explained. Such variation, in other words, entails the central issue of causality, which enables a story to turn into a plot by suggesting to its viewers not just how the figures on the screen are running but also why and where. Since too much change might risk the loss of continuity (of a particular corporeal sort, I will show), a curious tension emerges between repetition and difference,[16] as we can see most clearly in one of the earliest, purest, longest, and most popular of these chase movies.

The Escaped Lunatic was a fifteen-shot extravaganza made in November 1903 by Biograph, which boasted the next year that the film had been "the leading feature of the Keith [vaudeville] circuit and other first-class houses for the past six months."[17] This film runs (pun intended) for about eight minutes,[18] filled from start to finish with (to borrow the subsequent rhetoric of Hollywood hype) nonstop action. But this is excitement of a very pecu-

liar sort. The film opens with a frontal shot of an inmate pacing back and forth in a room with a barred window and a locked door in the back. The man is immediately identifiable as crazy—insanity given external, visual proof by virtue of the Napoleon costume that he is wearing. His insanity is confirmed seconds later, when an attendant dressed in white enters the cell with a food tray, which the lunatic throws at him. A fight ensues, and two more attendants rush in to subdue the inmate. Once they exit, the lunatic overturns a table, pries apart the window bars, and uses the table leg to smash the glass and crawl though the window. The three attendants then reenter the cell to see that their inmate has escaped. All this occurs in a single shot taken from a stationary camera.

The film next cuts to a second, long exterior shot showing the lunatic leaping out of the third-story window. Panning right, the camera tracks the man as he gets up from the ground and begins to run, followed by his three keepers, who have rushed out the front entrance of the asylum to apprehend their rebellious charge. The next eleven shots—the heart of the film—depict the lunatic being chased by the attendants in a variety of natural settings, which are first shown empty and then with the running lunatic, who usually enters from back to front of the frame toward the camera in a long shot, followed by his pursuers. The film's final two shots show the maniac returning to the asylum, while the camera now pans left as he jumps up magically to the same third-story window to reenter his cell (the film's final shot), where he puts on his hat and begins calmly to read a newspaper, to the astonishment of the bedraggled attendants who burst into the room to discover him there.

I call this chase film the purest of the pure because of the obvious problem of motivation: if the lunatic runs to escape, as the title suggests, then why does he voluntarily return to his cell? In other chase films, the motivation for movement remains crucial, whether it be cops chasing a robber (after a crime is committed) or women chasing a man (in hopes of marriage). But *The Escaped Lunatic* quite fastidiously undermines such motivation by making its final two shots perfectly symmetrical with its first two to create the effect of a circularity in which nothing has happened—as if it were all just a frenetic dream for pursuers, pursued, and viewers alike. The maniac, we understand, runs only to run; there is no other goal than movement itself, no other reason for us to watch the movie than to see bodies in motion. During one of the chase shots in the middle of the film, in fact, the lunatic has to prod his tired pursuers—who lounge on the grass and then roll down a hill (like three inanimate logs)—to continue the chase, lest the momentum of the film and the interest of its viewers begin to flag. If stasis

spells the end of the film for both characters and audience, then movement must be sustained at all costs.

Why does the lunatic run? The obvious answer—that he is crazy—is less a cause than a symptom of a broader kind of corporeal hysteria that marks these chase films more generally. A clue to this hysteria resides in the film's opening shot, which relies on the standard setup of early cinema—a fixed camera, a frontal tableau, and a transparently phony-looking stage set (painted cell blocks)—to depict a deluded Napoleon who restlessly paces back and forth to the very edges of the film frame. Such impatient pacing marks what Andrey Tarkovsky, arguing against the primacy of editing, suggestively calls cinematic "time-pressure," the sense that time is "imprinted in the frame" and "runs through the shot."[19] An impotent bundle of pent-up energy confined to a locked room, the inmate embodies the urge—shared by filmmaker and spectator—to break free from the restrictions of the imprisoning fixed frame and the limited potential for narrative it contains. When he goes through the window and out the frame (his prison cell), he literally seeks to escape the bonds and bounds of the single-shot format. Anne Friedberg has remarked about a slightly later set of films (Griffith's early Biograph melodramas) that madness serves as "a metaphor for narrative incoherence, a text which needs to be controlled."[20] But here madness seems to serve as the prime impetus for narration itself, which depends on following the trajectory of the body in continuous motion beyond the confines of the cell.

Yet once this anarchistic energy is released outdoors, and the camera begins to track the madman running, we discover that he truly has nowhere to go. In this respect the claim that the chase constitutes a kind of ground zero for film narrative remains a bit dubious. Continuous action, yes, but continuity? Not quite. In keeping with the film's essential circularity (like a dog chasing its tail), this lunatic lacks direction. There are virtually no matching cuts on action (as we would identify them today), so that all of the next eleven shots follow no special order and are virtually interchangeable with one another. The one match is especially revealing: the film cuts to a different camera position, from a medium-range side-angle shot taken on a bridge to a long frontal shot from the river below, just as the lunatic is about to throw one of the attendants, beaten insensate, over the bridge's railing.[21]

More than a simple reversion to "attractions" tricks à la Méliès (in which a dummy is substituted for a prone body), this carefully constructed two-shot sequence stands out by deliberately calling attention to the filmmaker's otherwise studied indifference to spatial and narrative coherence. The match also suggests that such continuity is reserved for the inanimate body, whose

fate—to be flung from bridge to river—must be scrupulously recorded, even as running bodies (including this supposedly inert, dead dummy!) are then free subsequently to continue in a kind of frenzy of Brownian movement. With the exception of this one match, there is simply no arranging of shots in a particular sequence for a particular effect—no analytic editing, as we now understand the concept. The result is that the chase charts ceaseless action but fails to map out any sort of identifiable geography or sense of coherent space from one self-contained scene to the next. Like the disoriented madman himself, we never quite know where we are as we watch him run. The lunatic thus appears to have escaped the tyranny of the autonomous shot, but really has not, since the film refuses to make its story—one damn thing after another, the same damn thing after another—conform to a linear plot.

In each separate shot, the madman tends to run from the background to the foreground, past the camera and out of the frame, a process to be repeated in the next shot. But there is also another, vertical movement that turns out to be even more important for understanding how such repeating action is triggered. To say the lunatic "runs" is a bit misleading, for more accurately he stumbles, trips, falls, slides, and tumbles his way across the screen. Virtually all these shots depict steep vertical inclined planes—hills, ravines, and sloped roofs, for instance—which make gravity do the madman's work for him, as if he were not in control even of his own legs, let alone aware of the purpose of his running. Hence the astonishing penultimate shot, drawing on cinema's earliest aesthetic of attractions, that shows the inmate seeming to defy gravity by leaping up three vertical stories to regain his prison cell. In perfect keeping with the film's circular symmetry, this magic vertical leap reverses the earlier second shot showing the escapee's fall out of the window frame. The effect of this reverse motion is to suggest that he is being irresistibly drawn back into his cell by a powerful but invisible physical force operating on his body outside of his control. Defined as a lack of motivation, the hysteric's madness, his presumed mental state, thus becomes externalized and visualized in the landscape itself, which serves to dramatize the absence of any internal principle of consciousness dictating the lunatic's actions.[22] Gravity substitutes for sanity, thereby liberating, but also controlling, film's potential for narration, figured in the chase as the body in constant motion.

The madman possesses no such internal controlling principle, or rather, no such principle possesses him: aside from his throwing the food tray, which motivates the fight, and his desire to burst the bounds of the frame, which motivates the subsequent action, once pursuit begins there is little

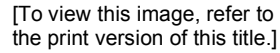

Figure 10. *The Escaped Lunatic* (1903).

sign of volition. Apart from prodding his pursuers to continue, he gives little or no indication of design, although at one key moment, looking straight at the camera (common in early cinema), he does stick out his tongue at us as he runs by. But even this gesture of affront serves less to assure us that he has a will and a mind than to challenge such an assurance, mocking his viewers' best efforts to "get" or capture the recalcitrant lunatic—that is, to make some sense of his actions (see fig. 10).

The madman, then, is less a man than a perpetual running machine, an automaton—rendered so by the cinematic chase itself—as well as the thing that makes unmotivated movement possible. Early cinema's chase films at the turn of the twentieth century thus represent one important example of what Mark Seltzer has called naturalist dramas of uncertain agency, wherein "the principle of locomotion which in liberal market culture is the sign of agency is in machine culture the sign of automatism."[23] The escaped lunatic's motion is literally loco. Yet while other manifestations of material culture of the era, such as trains, elevators, and Ferris wheels, put fixed bodies within moving machines, here we find moving bodies stuck within a curiously static cinematic apparatus that self-consciously flaunts the detachment between volition and motion.

We can most graphically see this uncoupling between mind and body in *The Escaped Lunatic* by tracing the vicissitudes of Napoleon's hat, a seemingly insignificant object that metonymically stands for the madman's head. It is knocked off during the initial chaotic fight with the attendants, who then replace it as a measure of order when they try to calm the man down by making him sit still. The madman takes it off and throws it out the win-

dow before he jumps, but in the next shot, the sequence is strangely and inexplicably reversed, as we see first the inmate fall down in an inanimate heap, followed a good four or five seconds later by his hat. The falling hat seems to arouse and animate him, in fact, as if his body could start moving only once it became reattached to its head via the hat. For the remainder of the film (a kind of Cartesian comedy), the lunatic's hat, as well as the hats of his pursuers, come on and off from shot to shot, perhaps more randomly then purposefully in keeping with the film's active resistance to any sort of system of narrative continuity, but in any case serving to remind viewers of the tenuous connection between mind and body, volition and motion.

I refer to the film's "active resistance" to narrative logic guardedly but pointedly. Up until the past two decades, to reiterate, early cinema historians frequently slipped into a nagging sort of teleological fallacy, chiding "primitive" film for lacking the formal sophistication found in classic Hollywood narratives, which they implicitly imposed as a single standard, after the fact, against which to judge the failures of earlier efforts. The great advantage of the "cinema of attractions" model was precisely to reject such teleological assumptions by trying to take early cinema more on its own terms: these strange short films were no longer simply stumbling failures on the inevitable road to Hollywood, but rather were a different sort of visual display that drew and produced a different sort of audience. In this view, early cinema functioned mainly to shock, astonish, assault, or delight its spectators rather than tell coherent stories to them. Yet I must modify this "attractions" historical model—revise the revisionists, so to speak—by restoring a certain kind of intentionality that resides in these curious 1903–4 chase films, which arise at a crucial point in the development of film narrative. Films clearly do not make themselves. But by attributing intention (in phenomenology's sense of an "orientation" or "tending toward") to the product more so than the producer, I want to emphasize how these pursuit films (*The Escaped Lunatic* in particular) are marked by a certain self-consciousness, a distinctive awareness of their moment in time. This historical awareness manifests itself as an ambiguity toward the construing of narrative—a nostalgia for the autonomy of the single shot, reiterated over and over again in a kind of stable holding pattern, even as these chase films represent bodies in motion pushing toward a more dynamic linearity.

In an entirely different context, Theodore Leinwand has called such a process "recursion," which he defines as a "repetition that devolves from the disturbing forces the one who repeats has him or herself awakened." He goes on to clarify that in tracing "those steps between now and then that are not necessarily traversed in straightforward fashion," recursion as a kind of

historical reaction "corresponds less to a rearguard effort to stymie or retard than to a knowing return to that which is being superseded by those who themselves are abetting this supersession."[24] In the case of *The Escaped Lunatic,* the concept of recursion helps us see how the film in its motiveless pursuit recoils from the implications of continuity storytelling even as it shows, by its analytic delinking of motion and volition, how such linear plotting would work. Noël Burch and other film scholars have invoked the "ambivalence" of Edwin S. Porter or D. W. Griffith (at a later period of transformation) to try to account for the transitional qualities of early cinema. But recursion shifts attention away from the filmmaker (as author) to consider how films in such moments of passage work to resist their own formal innovations.[25] As Thomas Elsaesser has noted, "The Janus-faced character of Porter is ultimately not in the director, but in the possibilities we have of understanding his work: whether from the 'autonomy' of the primitive mode towards what was to follow, or retrospectively, looking back at the primitive mode from the vantage point and the agenda of the classic mode."[26]

Recursion, as I am employing the term, is less a matter of an individual filmmaker's divided attitude toward change, less a matter even of our own understanding of film history (as Elsaesser would have it), than a regressive return in these films triggered by the process of transition itself. Like the running maniac who escapes the confines of his cell only to repeat himself, *The Escaped Lunatic* in this sense can be read as a sort of allegory enacting the problematics of film history itself, which oscillates between one mode of representation and another without quite knowing which way to go. The chase's recursive pattern more generally derives from a certain hysterical formation that centers on anxieties about the human body, as we can see by turning to a few other examples of the genre.

A few months before the Biograph company made *The Escaped Lunatic,* a British film titled *Daring Daylight Burglary* was released in the United States to great acclaim.[27] As early as 1901, British filmmakers had combined crime with the chase to create an exciting kind of fast-paced drama that powerfully influenced their American counterparts, such as Edwin S. Porter. Unlike in *The Escaped Lunatic,* plot motivation is clearly not a problem, as the desperate burglar exercises all sorts of ingenuity to avoid being caught by pursuing policemen, including hopping a train as it departs a station in the penultimate shot of the movie. If anything, the action implies more plot than the film can visually contain. The narrative concludes by showing the thief's arrest after he leaves the train as it pulls into another station—a denouement that depends on extradiegetic information to explain how the

police at the second station were aware of the criminal's presence on the incoming train. Such information does not reside in the film itself; it had to be supplied by the film's exhibitor or accompanying lecturer, relying on a catalog description clarifying that the police telegraphed their counterparts to alert them of the traveling burglar. While the police are initially informed about the burglary by an eyewitness, a boy who is shown running to alert the police, the criminal's final apprehension thus depends on disembodied communications technology that remains invisible to the eye of the film spectator. Insofar as the electronic telegraph outstrips a speeding train, outstrips the physical chase itself, it seems at this point in early cinema to elude visual representation altogether, requiring a verbal text outside the film (the catalog or the lecture) to supplement a plotline that otherwise risks incoherence.

As if to counteract this disembodied supplementarity, the film curiously arrests its own action to dwell on the fate of the body itself. Like *The Escaped Lunatic, Daring Daylight Burglary* also makes use of a trick substitution. Here the criminal throws a (dummy) policeman off a rooftop during a fight. Unlike in the Biograph film, however, what follows is not a matching shot but rather an excruciatingly plodding scene that first shows the prone policemen by the side of an empty road, then a second policemen coming up to inspect the body, then a curious onlooker driving by in a horse cart, and finally an approaching ambulance wagon, whose driver gets out and helps the waiting policemen put the body onto a stretcher and into the wagon before we resume watching the chase in the next shot. In a film running about four minutes total, with each action-filled shot averaging about twenty seconds, this static shot focusing on the lifeless body, fully one minute long, drags on for an eternity. Unlike a Hitchcock film, where the gaze of characters at inanimate objects often functions to focalize the plot and heighten suspense, this shot stops the narrative flow dead in its tracks, forcing us to forget about the ongoing chase, which comes as something of a surprise when it resumes.

Why would a film dedicated to exciting action so perversely thwart its own logic? In contemporary action films such as *Lethal Weapon* or *Die Hard,* for instance, it would be absurd to imagine such meticulous attention to the disposition of the inanimate body, since one goal of such frantically paced movies is to distract us from thinking too much about the countless corpses inevitably littering the screen (unless such corpses come back to life, as in horror films). *Daring Daylight Burglary*'s focus on the still body perhaps owes something to early cinema's "operational aesthetic," as Charles Musser has described it—the tendency of many of these films to

detail for their curious spectators how a particular process is done: in this case, how bodies are removed from crime scenes. But presumably audiences would have been more interested in learning specifics about the crime itself, which is quickly glossed over in the film.[28] The preoccupation with the body as inanimate object suggests something else. Corresponding to the structure of recursion, or return, that marks these films in their historicity, the camera's fixation with the arrested body registers a similar kind of concern about the fate of the moving body relentlessly driven by the chase.

I should hasten to add that not all early pursuit films linger so over the isolated motionless body. Another group of important films from 1904–5 dwell more on the consequences of bodies (plural) in motion to suggest a similar sort of anxiety about corporeal loss. These four represent in fact the very core of the early cinematic chase: the Biograph hit *Personal* (June 1904), which was quickly imitated two months later by the even more popular Edison remake, *How a French Nobleman Got a Wife through the "New York Herald" Personal Columns* (the title says it all), followed by Siegmund Lubin's remake *Meet Me at the Fountain* (November 1904), and then Pathé's *Dix Femmes pour un Mari* (April 1905). This is a striking succession of remakes, more so if we add Edison's *The Maniac Chase* (September 1904), a remake of *The Escaped Lunatic*. From the start, early filmmakers imitated each other's most successful efforts, quickly spawning entire subgenres of films (the fire run, the phantom train shot, boxing matches, and military parades) in an effort to figure out and then duplicate what the public most wanted to see. Yet beyond this obvious market-driven conventionality (which we still see at work today in the Hollywood sequel), the continuous reiterated action in these filmed chases lends itself in specific and significant ways to repeated copying. The fact that all four films survive affords us a rare opportunity to interrogate the relation between repetition within each pursuit film and the repetition between them.[29]

Personal, to begin with the first of these comedies, clearly owes something to its Biograph precursors *The Escaped Lunatic* and *Daring Daylight Burglary*. Male hysteria—the lunatic's running madness—seems to provide the generic crossover between drama and comedy for the chase, which in *Personal* explicitly becomes gendered: bunches of women seeking marriage relentlessly pursue an overwhelmed foppish aristocratic suitor, whose newspaper notice in the personal column had triggered their response in the first place. So what is the structural relation between marriage (comedy) and crime (drama)? In either case, the chase depicts ostensible agents of order (police, attendants, women) seeking to capture some disruptive force, who is contained and subdued by them in the end as social order becomes restored.

Yet in the first two films, while we may not actively root for the madman or thief, our attention is obviously focused on the pursued, the resolutely singular man. In *Personal*, the attention shifts to the pursuers, who quickly assume the group role of hysterics. In the final shot of the film, for example, closure is achieved by having the first woman to reach the Frenchman pull a handgun out of her purse to coerce him into making a marriage proposal. While it superficially resembles concluding shots of cops arresting criminals in chase dramas, her gesture—the movie's comic punch line as it were—ends the film with an unsettling threat of violence.

These chase comedies' fixation on a threatening mob of women—powerful, in charge of the plot, but out of control, barely sane—clearly points to infantile male fantasies and nightmares about marriage, which is ultimately treated as a form of punishment. Yet beyond the obvious fear of female desire that motivates the dreamlike repetition-compulsion of the chase,[30] there is another sort of distress about the moving human body in general that emerges when we look closely at how such scenes of pursuit are rendered. After an initial bit of physical jostling and bumping as woman after woman crowds toward the nobleman, he takes off running and is followed by the women, moving one by one, single file. As Noël Burch, Tom Gunning, and André Gaudreault have each briefly remarked on (but only in terms of spatiotemporal continuity, not corporeality), the chase then falls into a curious pattern in which one shot does not give way to the next until all the chasing figures have left the frame.[31] The result is an oddly neurotic sort of accounting for each woman, one by one, as if a body might somehow be lost or destroyed and not show up in the next shot if the chase were to cut away in midaction, while a figure was still in the frame. Simply put, editing threatens the body, threatens to dismember it—an effect *Personal* seems to be trying to counteract, at the risk of retarding its action (like the ambulance scene in *Daring Daylight Burglary*) by insisting on showing each and every figure move through each and every shot.[32]

At the same time that *Personal* seeks to preserve corporeal integrity at any cost, in its ceaseless frenetic reiterations of the same it displays little regard for the progress of the individual female's body. While it is easy to follow the man out front from shot to shot as he negotiates various obstacles in his path (a fence, a steep embankment, and so on), the trailing women, lined up in single file, remain virtually indistinguishable from one another. Following the (il)logic of its Biograph predecessor *The Escaped Lunatic*, this film too presents continuous action that refuses to be shaped into ordered continuity (as we now know it): a woman wearing a black dress—clothing being the only marker of specificity—might be third in

line in one shot and suddenly ninth in line in the very next shot. Obsessive linearity within each shot is inversely proportional to the lack of linearity between shots. Just as the shots themselves are interchangeable in the chase (with the exception of the first and last), so too within each particular shot are the women themselves, whose impersonal yearning for the male thus becomes bodily materialized, measured, and abstracted in motion. A throwback to Étienne-Jules Marey's photographic studies, which aimed to analyze movement in real time from a fixed perspective, the chase records many bodies in motion, but as if they formed a kind of composite group.[33] The synthetic space of the linear chase thus creates a synthetic kind of feminine whole. While in the McKinley funeral procession films (see chapter 1) such public regimentation of marching bodies serves to reinforce social norms against the threat of anarchy, here the attempted management of women's moving bodies—keeping them at least in a straight line to limit their personal agency—serves more specifically to regulate female desire.

When we compare *Personal* with its remakes, we might begin to feel that, like the women and the shots, these films are virtually interchangeable with one another. Yet subtle differences emerge that help us to see how each remake functions as a kind of reading of the chase genre's potential for plot itself. While the initial motivation for pursuit remains identical, each film opens and closes a bit differently, thereby framing its ceaseless reiteration of motion differently. *Personal* begins with the Frenchman pacing (like the escaped lunatic) in front of Grant's Tomb waiting for a personal column respondent to arrive. As in *Daring Daylight Burglary*'s telegraphed alert to the police, a key piece of communicated information—the Frenchman's thirty-word newspaper advertisement for a woman—exists as a textual supplement outside the film, transcribed in full in the accompanying Keith vaudeville program, as well as in Biograph's catalog description of the film, presumably to be read to the audience by the film exhibitor at the start of the show or shown by lantern slide.[34] Porter's remake for Edison opens by inserting this very advertisement (more extensive than a simple intertitle), with a couple of words changed, into the film itself, which now contains all the exposition needed. The opening continues with the Frenchman perusing his notice in the newspaper and preening vainly before a mirror. The Biograph audience's extradiegetic reading of an expository text thus becomes integrated into the Edison's very narrative, which begins by imaging words on a page. Whether inadvertent or not, the mirror here serves to remind us of the power of film to incorporate and duplicate both text and pictures (the doubled body), just as Edison's chase film is engaged in repeating the moving images of its Biograph rival. Lubin's remake takes Edison's new opening

and pushes it back one step, showing the Frenchman in the process of writing the personal notice and mailing it to the newspaper, as if to emphasize the more originary act of writing (authorship) instead of reading, even as it embarks on its own copy of a copy.

Each film's closure works differently as well. In the penultimate scene of *Personal,* the strict linearity of the chase breaks down as woman number 2 falls down, causing all the subsequent women to fall in a heap around her and allowing the frontrunner in the final shot to pull out her gun and "arrest" the cowering nobleman. In their frantic desire, the other women in effect implode or collapse upon themselves (see fig. 11). Edison's version, by contrast, ends with one brave woman wading into a stream to claim her husband as the more timid ones wait on the riverbank—a conclusion Lubin's remake imitates, accentuating the slapstick humor by revealing the victor in the final shot to be a famous female impersonator. Beyond the obvious vaudeville gag, the fact that the Frenchman is finally caught by another man (in drag) suggests the phantasmagoric circularity of the film's repeating action, as if the man (mirrored from the start) has been chasing himself all along. Lubin's entire version, in fact, is drenched in excess, with double the women (twenty instead of ten) meant to produce double the fun, a strategy that clearly backfires since it significantly delays the pace of pursuit as we must wait patiently, shot after shot, for all twenty figures to leave the film frame.

In terms of both opening and closing, then, these imitations alter what they seek to copy. Pushing serial action in the direction of a plot, Edwin S. Porter's Edison remake—the most popular of the films—seems to be the most satisfying, since it allows us to isolate and follow a single figure, a stout woman who shows up last in line, shot after shot, struggling to catch up to the others and eventually triumphing by claiming her man. Unlike *Personal*'s closure by arbitrary violence, here the lesson of the story is clear: persistence pays off. By such a moral, Biograph's hysterical chase, defying narrative logic, thus gets rationalized, "improved," or corrected by its remake. The Biograph company itself seems to have realized as much, since its catalog copy promoting its "great comedy-hit chase film" *Personal* (published a week before the release of *How a French Nobleman . . .*) appears to be describing Edison's film rather than its own by singling out individual characters, a "fat girl," a "neat little lady," and so on.[35]

That Biograph seemed to have confused its own chase with Edison's is especially ironic, given the fact that in November 1904 the company initiated a law suit against Edison for copyright infringement of *Personal.* In seeking to untangle the relation between the two cinematic chases, this copyright

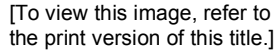

Figure 11. *Personal* (1904).

case raised central questions about the nature of film narrative in general.[36] Earlier court cases, such as Edison's own 1902–3 suit charging Lubin with partially duplicating one of its actualities, tended to focus on the materiality of the medium, probing whether a film negative was simply a succession of discrete frames (which would therefore all need to be copyrighted separately like still photographs, as Lubin argued), or a single continuous strip that could be copyrighted in its entirety as long as it was taken from a single camera position (as the judge ultimately ruled). But with the rise of story films, contested definitions of film now centered on the shot as the primary unit of meaning in trying to understand the relation of the part to the whole.

Seizing on the relative autonomy of each shot within *Personal,* Edison's lawyers argued that Porter did not duplicate the film but instead loosely reproduced its own version of women pursuing a man; since the Biograph film consisted of eight self-contained scenes of running, "the full protection of complainant's production could only be secured by filing eight distinct titles, making eight distinct deposits of copies, [and] the paying of eight distinct fees."[37] In this view *Personal* consists of "eight distinct acts or events" rather than a "connected series of 'undistinguishable pictures.' "[38] To support the position that Biograph failed to procure adequate copyright as a photo-

graph, Edison followed Lubin's line of argument in the earlier case to emphasize the chase's material mode of production—separate shots "taken from different standpoints, at different times, and, probably upon different films"[39]—as well as its possible mode of exhibition, one self-contained scene at a time. Against the charge of plagiarism, Edison's lawyers also questioned *Personal*'s claim for originality by insisting that both companies based their chases on the same source, a comic strip that they claimed Biograph had borrowed from a newspaper. To complicate matters further, one day before it copyrighted its remake, Edison apparently had published the identical personal advertisement that opens the film, so that it could then suggest in its catalog description that its story was derived from a text "which actually appeared in the *New York Herald* of August 25th, 1904."[40]

Biograph countered by claiming that this advertisement was itself plagiarized, lifted virtually verbatim (with only two words altered) from its own notice, originated by one of its employees, upon which its storyline was based.[41] Against Edison's focus on the film's methods of production, the Biograph lawyers emphasized the intentions and effects of *Personal,* arguing that the "composite photographs" of its chase, "showing continuous and progressive action of object and events, practically constitute books written in the primitive characters of the race, as illustrated in the picture-writing of the Indians and other early peoples."[42] The judge in the case ultimately decided that Edison did not violate Biograph's copyright, which was inadequately registered solely as a series of photographs and not as an original dramatic production. Despite this ruling, the judge did endorse Biograph's main line of reasoning, insisting that "a series of pictures telling a single story" could be copyrighted, just as "written words" are protected by copyright even though in "unfolding its incidents, the reader is carried from one scene to another."[43]

This important legal case abounds in ironies and perplexities. First, in grappling with the relation between part and whole, which was crucial for understanding the relation between the two films, defendant and plaintiff hardly discussed any changes in the narrative structure of Edison's remake: its new opening (the newspaper ad itself inserted into the body of the film), as well as its revised ending, which gave the chase more semblance of a plot.[44] Yet Biograph clearly did understand its chase as *some* sort of narrative, corresponding, it insisted, "practically" to "books" written at a primitive stage of cultural development. However suspect, the analogy to "the picture-writing of the Indians" (ideograms or pictographs) reveals an important historical awareness, an attempt to understand how the emerging visual medium of film was discovering how to tell stories. Second,

Biograph's grasp of early cinema's transitional moment is doubly ironic, since its case against Edison compelled Biograph to claim a kind of linear coherence for *Personal* that it recursively disavowed in the repeating action of the chase itself. Third and perhaps most perplexing, the two film companies and the judge all struggled to come to terms with cinematic narrative by invoking precursors with clear legal precedent for copyright: still photographs, theatrical shows, and written words.[45] But this screen drama had no script beyond a newspaper personal notice of debatable origin, nor did its pictures keep still.

How a succession of moving images could turn into "a single story" akin to writing remains the puzzle of the court case and the mystery at the heart of the chase. In this regard, I conclude by pondering what Biograph's lawyers might have meant when they referred to "the primitive characters of the race." Meaning a "letter" as well as an "individual," the word *character* plays on the relation between writing and people, just as *race* puns on the human race and the repetitious activity of pursuit itself. But how and where do persons and words intersect in early cinema, and what allows racing characters to be read as narrative? The answer, these chase films suggest at this particular moment of transition, is nothing more or less than the human figure in motion, male or female, singular or composite, driven by desire or aimlessly lunatic. Narrative continuity thus comes to depend less on particular techniques of filmmaking, such as analytic editing, than on representations of corporeality: the moving body or bodies in the film turning into the abstracted body of the film.[46] Challenging us to make sense of its senseless reiterations, the body serves as the basic or "primitive" building block for plotting, the mobile script of intelligibility by which viewers learned to follow the stories early cinema had begun to tell.

4 Windows 1900; or, *Life of an American Fireman*

It may be a truism to say that "all media were once new media," but if so, it is a truism exasperatingly difficult to keep in mind.[1] It is one thing to recall that it took a full twenty years for Thomas Edison's phonograph, which he intended to serve as a dictation device for businessmen, to achieve its primary function as a machine for musical entertainment, or that for two decades radio's first enthusiasts were convinced it was perfect for two-way communication rather than for unilateral broadcast, the function it gradually came to acquire in the 1920s. But it is another thing, shifting from hardware to software, to move from the history of technological devices themselves to habits of listening, reading, hearing, and viewing—to take seriously, that is, the newness of any given medium. It is remarkably hard to resist the tyranny of normalization and naturalization—to see past or through or beyond codes of intelligibility once these conventions have become entrenched and taken for granted. All the more reason, then, to struggle to locate a medium historically at its moments of emergence, when it has not yet quite figured out what it is good for, or (to deny it autonomous agency) to see what its own practitioners made of it during its earliest stages. Such a mode of analysis operates in the subjunctive mood, imagining what a medium could or might have been, rather than where it came from or what it became. By strenuously entertaining alternatives and possibilities that perhaps never are actualized—multiple hypothetical futures—we put ourselves in a better position to understand the medium and its governing paradigms as they came to materialize.

Early cinema is especially challenging to think about as a new medium. Within a relatively short period of time, from the first projected moving images intended for public consumption in 1895 to, say, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) some twenty years later, virtually all the fundamental ques-

tions about the medium seem to have been essentially resolved: whether film would tell stories or record "reality" (tell stories), how spatiotemporal articulation would be achieved between shots (parallel editing, shot/reverse shot, and 180-degree cuts), where movies would be shown (nickelodeons and then palaces), and what audiences would do as they watched them (keep silent and identify with the characters on the screen).[2] Although we can never entirely escape our own historical situatedness—that is, our knowledge of cinema's subsequent century of development—trying to take these early films on their own terms, and trying to understand these very terms, encourages us to reconnect with the newness of the medium.

In my previous chapter I endeavored to zero in on the emergence of film narration by looking at the mechanisms of repetitious body movement in a series of chase films made around 1904 whose recursive patterns were less a function of individual artistic choice than the governing formal logic of the pursuit itself. Here, turning the historical clock back about one year and shifting my approach, I concentrate on a single prominent filmmaker and his well-known film *Life of an American Fireman*, made in late 1902 by Edwin S. Porter while he was working for the Edison Manufacturing Company. As Charles Musser and others have noted, the years 1902 and 1903 mark a crucial period in early cinema, when production companies began assuming greater control over films (as opposed to exhibitors) and as multishot narratives began to gain ascendancy over single-shot actualities. Inspired by Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), Porter would later recall that after seeing such "trick films" he "came to the conclusion that a picture telling a story in continuity form might draw the customers back to the theatres."[3] Exactly what Porter means by "continuity form" is the issue; even as *Life of an American Fireman* does indeed tell a story, its formal continuity seems to be compromised, at least to our eyes today, by flagrant disconnections, redundancies, and obscurely motivated action. What intrigues me about the film is precisely its status as a hybrid located at a key moment of transformation. Rather than being driven primarily by concerns about plot, time, or narrative causality, the film deploys bodies to try out differing productions and reproductions of space in ways that significantly test possibilities for the new medium of cinema.

Although later I draw on the 1903 Edison catalog's detailed description of this six-minute film, a brief summary of *Life of an American Fireman* is helpful at the onset. The film opens with a long shot of a sleeping fireman, which includes a dream balloon showing a mother and child. After the fireman awakens and paces the floor, we cut to a close-up of a hand pulling a fire alarm, followed by a long shot of firemen jumping from their beds and slid-

ing down a fire pole. The fourth and fifth shots show them climbing into their horse-drawn fire engines and exiting the firehouse. The next two shots show the engines running down streets and arriving at the scene of a burning building. The penultimate shot depicts a smoke-filled bedroom with mother and child, who are carried out, one by one, by a fireman entering through a door and exiting from a window. The final, ninth shot depicts the same rescue as viewed from the exterior front of the house.

Let's begin by looking at what I take to be the core of the film: shots 6 and 7 depicting a succession of fire engines—a dozen all told—racing across the screen diagonally from right to left toward the camera. Taking up roughly a quarter of the movie, this fire run may strike us today as monotonous if not downright tedious, the least interesting aspect of *Life of an American Fireman*. But it is absolutely crucial for understanding how Porter likely conceived and built the film, step by step. Immensely popular during the earliest novelty years of cinema (1895–97), the fire run foregrounds action, transport, and spectacle, clearly confirming Gunning's model of a cinema of attractions. Yet insofar as separate fire runs could be strung together in serial fashion, one shot reiterated after another ad infinitum, the visual immediacy of a self-contained scene gives way to a more comprehensive sense of linearity that imagines space as a synthetic whole even as actions within that space are not continuous between discrete cuts. Between long shots 6 and 7, in other words, no effort is made to match particular vehicles or streets, and yet in this repetition-without-resemblance we are made to feel action greater than the action of any of its individual agents. As in the chase films discussed in chapter 3, the repetition of fire engine after fire engine produces a sensation of endless blurring or merger, creating in effect a single composite grand engine driven by a kind of abstracted motion that does not seem to depend on or be measured by chronological time. A throwback to or trace of cinema's beginnings, the fire run, repeated, thus gave Porter an already familiar way to construe space as serial if not contiguous.

Beyond its sheer movement, the fire run was so attractive in the first years of cinema specifically because of the exciting visual appeal of the subject itself, the "wonderful apparatus of a great city's fire department" celebrated in the Edison catalog's own description of the film.[4] *Apparatus* here refers to the entire materiality of firefighting: not just steam engines, hooks, ladders, and pumps but also the horses and men driving these vehicles. As many scholars have noted, an operational aesthetic often runs through early cinema, implicitly linking the workings of the new medium of moving pictures with the institutional operations of other fascinating technologies, such as railroads and telegraphs.[5] More pointedly in the case of the fire run,

the singular apparatus of men, engines, and horses all energetically straining in unison invokes what Mark Seltzer has called American naturalism's "machine-body complex" at the turn of the twentieth century.[6] The thermodynamic relays between persons and machines are complicated here by a third naturalist category, the beast, animals whose steaming breath mingled with the smoke of engines to form stupendous "horse effects," as early catalogs frequently described the allure.

Emphasizing the spectacle of the fire run helps us to appreciate another rarely discussed aspect of shots 6 and 7: the scores of people on-screen who line the streets and watch the fire engines go by, one by one. Who are these onlookers, what exactly do they think they are watching, and what is the significance of their acts of witnessing in relation to the film's contemporaneous audiences in 1903 and in relation to us, over one hundred years later? Their gathered presence on the street calls attention to the predetermined quality of the run, which clearly cannot be a spontaneous event. Since fires rarely break out on cue and therefore cannot be anticipated, we presume that these eager spectators must have been previously alerted to the arriving apparatus. What at first glance may seem to suggest the immediacy of a documentary turns out by virtue of these crowds of onlookers to resemble more closely an arranged piece of theater. Mirroring the very kind of watching that engaged the patrons of *Life of an American Fireman*, these on-screen viewers offered a focus of identification for early cinema audiences in the absence of the ideal, transcendental spectator position that we have come to associate with classical Hollywood narrative.

Yet before we assume that the fire and its exciting run-up were staged simply for the benefit of Porter's moving camera, it is important to realize that fire departments routinely went on such runs as a serious form of practice in order to prepare for the contingency of a fire. Newspapers in the 1890s would regularly publicize such exhibition runs. A notice for this particular run in the *Newark Evening News* dated November 15, 1902, for example, announces that "there will be a fire on Rhode Island," and that "the firemen will be called out and go through the motions of extinguishing a fire."[7] The phrase "going through the motions" neatly captures the theatricality of daily institutional routine, calling into question any clear dichotomy between concepts of "actuality" ("real") and "story" ("fictional") that still confounds attempts to categorize these early films, as I argue in chapter 2.[8] If early cinema frequently functioned as a "visual newspaper," as my previous discussion of the McKinley films makes clear, the precise nature of news itself at the turn of the twentieth century requires more careful analysis, as the November 16, 1902, *Newark Evening News* article

on the fire run suggests. Headlines for the article read: "RESCUE FROM FIRE WAS HUGE SUCCESS" and "Lightning Cameras Took Pictures While East Orange Firemen Perform a Realistic Scene." The article itself goes on to describe this realistic performance in comic fashion, reporting that a desperate woman and her babe in arms, seemingly "doomed to awful death," are valiantly rescued by James White of the "Edison Kinetoscope Company."[9] The joke here is to replace fireman with filmmaker, so that what at first looks like (mock) news about a fire turns out to be perhaps even more interesting news about a filming, with firefighters limited to the role of extras.[10]

In *Life of an American Fireman* itself, the analogy between two newsworthy performances—by the wonderful apparatuses of firefighting and filmmaking—emerges most self-consciously toward the end of shot 7, during the transition from fire run to fire rescue. As the last of the engines finishes its run, the camera pans left (the only pan in the film) to follow the vehicle as it pulls up to a row of houses and firemen jump off to prepare to fight the flames. Charles Musser has remarked about this moment that "the moving camera suggests the immediacy of a news film."[11] But however consistent with actualities, the gradual pivot also suggests quite the reverse, a planned "demonstration," to borrow again from the *Newark Evening News* article. At first hesitant but then gaining in speed, the pan, in shifting from run to rescue, signals Porter's ambition to move beyond endlessly repeating actuality footage by adding a denouement to his narrative. In this regard, the panorama calls attention to the perfect placement of the camera at a prearranged spot, from which it can seamlessly encompass both the serial movements of the run and the subsequent preparations for rescue via a fixed perspective that views, by means of a long shot, the front of the burning building. Porter enlists firefighting equipment itself to help the eye follow this transition, as the camera during the pan traces the rapid unspooling of a long, thick fire hose, which corresponds to the horizontal plane of the action. In the film's final shot, with the camera again stationary, Porter similarly establishes a vertical plane of action by way of the firemen's ladder leaned up against the house. Hoses and ladders thus act as filmmaking props to construct an elastic two-dimensional spatial grid that invites the eye to follow figures moving up and down the frame as well as back and forth. This network stands in marked contrast to the serial spaces of the fire run, which render repeated motion endlessly, but only in a single diagonal direction from right to left.

Porter took pains earlier in the film to establish such vertical and horizontal expandable gridding, enabling him to experiment with an alternative

way to stretch space for the emergent medium of cinema. Shot 3 shows firemen at the firehouse responding to the alarm by sliding down the fire pole one by one in the center of the room, while shot 4, taken from the floor below, shows them, after a brief pause, hitting the floor and jumping into their engines. As in the case of the ladder, a prominent piece of fire apparatus (the pole) is used to establish a vertical plane of cinematic continuity, similar to the serial movements of engine after engine during the fire run but, more ambitiously here, tying together two contiguous spaces, top and bottom.[12] This gridding becomes explicit in the fourth shot's mise-en-scène: the back wall of the interior of the ground floor of the firehouse is literally painted with heavy black lines, vertical and horizontal, which resemble the rectangular configuration of windows and doors that we see in the next exterior long shot of the firehouse and later in the final exterior shot of the burning house.[13]

Windows and doors figure prominently in virtually every shot in the film, suggesting yet a third way Porter is trying to imagine and reimagine relations of space in *Life of an American Fireman*. His experimentation is on display most dramatically in the notorious final two shots of the film, the rescue of mother and child as seen first from the inside and then outside of the house. By calling the ending "notorious," I do not mean to revisit from scratch the well-known controversy surrounding the two versions of the film. Early cinema scholars two decades ago established beyond the shadow of doubt that the Museum of Modern Art version, featuring a dozen or so crosscuts between interior and exterior was in fact made during the 1930s or 1940s, as opposed to the version submitted to the Library of Congress for copyright purposes, which, in having no parallel editing at all, closely approximates the film as exhibited in 1903.[14] This critical crux is instructive for exposing the teleological pressures on an earlier generation of film historians intent on explaining an otherwise bizarre kind of repetition by discovering evidence of crosscutting well in advance of D. W. Griffith.[15] Early cinema is not Hollywood cinema, as *Life of an American Fireman* so vividly demonstrates. But we still may not fully understand the relation between these final two shots, usually simply dubbed a temporal overlap (common enough in other early films) or "duplication signifying simultaneity."[16] For one thing, the shots do not simply show the same actions twice, as frequently asserted, in that the crucial reunion of mother, child, and fireman which concludes the film is visible only from the exterior. Second, is it so clear that Porter is even interested in telling a story that takes place in continuous time? Moreover, it is not fully satisfying to claim that Porter is experimenting with multiple points of view (as in Akira Kurosawa's *Rasho-*

mon), a technique implying a sort of radical relativity or subjectivity that seems outside of the logic of this film.[17]

Focused on formal questions of temporal and narrative continuity, early cinema scholars pondering *Life of an American Fireman* have tended to pay less attention to the film's rendering of space, what I call spatial causality. Here is where windows and doors come in. As I have argued so far, *Life of an American Fireman* works a number of different ways to construe how a body moves through space unilaterally (the fire run) and two-dimensionally (the film's various systems of horizontal and vertical grids). Doors and windows suggest a third possibility, allowing for the effect of three-dimensional interiority and exteriority. Both shots 4 and 5, for example, taken inside the firehouse and then outside, highlight this effect by dramatizing the powerful movement of horses from the back to the front of the frame. The 1903 catalog describes the fourth scene this way: "As the men come down the pole . . . six doors in the rear of the engine house, each heading a horse-stall, burst open simultaneously and a huge fire horse . . . rushes from each opening." This spatial effect is accentuated by the camera's focus on a white horse boldly emerging from blackness (see fig. 12). The catalog's description of the next scene (shot 5) is similar, with "the great doors swinging open, and the apparatus coming out."[18] In both cases, the wonderful apparatus, the motivating energy of the moving picture, bursts forth from dark interior recesses to move toward the camera, not diagonally across the frame, as in the fire run, but rather more directly toward the front of the image. These opening portals create an illusion of depth significantly different from that of theatrical space, where entrances and exits most often occur from the wings of the stage.

We can appreciate this difference most markedly by returning to the film's penultimate shot, the interior of the burning house. A woman rises from her bed in a smoke-filled room, briefly looks in dismay directly at the camera, turns to go to a window at the rear of her upstairs bedroom to cry for help, then faints back on her bed. The fireman enters the room through a door frame right, sees the woman, removes the curtains and breaks open the rear window, picks up the prone body, and carries her out the window. From start to finish the large window dominates the scene, offering us (and the trapped woman) a tantalizing view of an exterior space (another house across the street) that represents safety and freedom. As in the case of the fire apparatus bursting through doorways in shots 4 and 5, here the window functions as an aperture drawing our eye—and the film apparatus—away from a claustrophobic and potentially fatal interior toward another, more inviting exterior scene. Her initial frontal look has established a direct sight

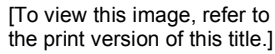

Figure 12. *Life of an American Fireman* (1902–3), shot 4.

line between the camera lens and the window, which in effect double one another. While the final two shots thus certainly denote a simultaneity of sorts, they also suggest an intriguing kind of causality, whereby the promise of the window compels the camera to follow the rescue to the outside, so that one rendering of space calls forth or begets another. As in the case of the lunatic who jumps out of his cell to escape the confines of the single shot (see chapter 3), here too a window affords liberation. When Porter cuts to the exterior in the final scene, the window plays an equally crucial role, framing the desperate woman gesturing for help. Only when the barrier between inside and outside is broken by the fireman's smashing of the window can bodies be released from one space to another (see fig. 13).[19]

Here it might be instructive to compare an important British predecessor, James Williamson's five-shot *Fire!* (1901), whose ending is similar to that of *Life of an American Fireman.* The penultimate interior shot of *Fire!* shows a fireman rescue a man in an upstairs bedroom by both entering and exiting via a window, while the final shot, without temporal overlap, shows the rescue by ladder from the outside. But the shaded window is simply a point of access: we see virtually nothing of the exterior world beyond it, nor do we see the man being carried through the opening. During the interior scene of *Life of an American Fireman,* by contrast, the window offers a clear, sus-

[To view this image, refer to the print version of this title.]

Figure 13. *Life of an American Fireman* (1902–3), shot 8.

tained view of the world outside, a desperately desired but seemingly unattainable space—unattainable since at this point in the film we have no inkling about the ladder that will enable the upstairs rescue. Until fireman and woman leave via the window, this outside remains only pure possibility, a second-story (pun intended) means of escape that in rejecting the conventional lateral stage exit suggests a different way the new medium of cinema could move bodies through space.[20]

Yet does my emphasis on spatial causality "solve" the puzzle of *Life of an American Fireman*'s double ending? The question of time remains, as Charles Musser remarks: "The problem highlighted in these two cuts is one that faced all filmmakers of this period—temporality. . . . Film, which is presented unfolding in time, demonstrates a tendency to make temporal relationships explicit. Continuity of action, embryonic at best in lantern shows, likewise became a central problem for early cinema. The mechanistic prejudice of film historians in the past has been to assume that early filmmakers were attempting to match action, just doing it badly[,] . . . but neither Porter nor Williamson was attempting to match action between contiguous spaces."[21] But then what *were* they attempting? If time, the temporal flow of action, does not necessarily connect shots, then what does? And why the repetition? After all, it would have been possible for Porter to allow

the space of shot 8 to give birth to the space of shot 9, so to speak, without going back in time, by starting the final exterior scene, for example, at the moment the woman is carried through the window, not when she first appears at it.

This hypothetical scenario, in fact, closely resembles the 1903 catalog account, which describes the mother's rescue, and then a "dissolve to the exterior of the building," where the frantic mother kneels on the ground to implore the firemen to return into the burning house to save her child. The catalog thus retains the sort of suspense we attribute to literary narrative, specifically the withholding or deferral of certain kinds of information which the film renders all too visible in its need to show the fate of each and every body in each and every shot. While cinematic suspense would become effortless once analytic editing, or crosscutting, took hold a few years later, Porter's 1903 film denies itself this pleasure by already presenting us with the rescue of the child in the previous interior shot. While it may be reasoned that Porter needed to begin the final shot where he did to explain the appearance of the ladder and to depict the iconographic reuniting of mother and child, his decision to stay with the interior shot until the child is carried out the window suggests less a concern about plot than, again, a more abstract preoccupation with the movement of bodies through cinematic space. As my previous chapter demonstrated, in popular chase films produced around the same time (1903–4), filmmakers maintained scrupulous respect for the integrity of the self-sufficient frame, refusing to go from one shot to the next until all bodies moving through the single frame had departed, effectively emptying space. The logic driving *Life of an American Fireman* similarly seems to require that a body moving from point A to point B be shown at all costs as exiting point A, and hence Porter's decision to go back in time to preserve the coherence of the body in space.[22]

In so privileging spatial relations over temporal flow, the film runs counter to a modern philosophical tradition inaugurated by Kant, who in the *Critique of Pure Reason* defined space as secondary and external, in contrast to the internal subjectivity of time. For Kant, Gilles Deleuze notes, "time is no longer related to the movement which it measures, but movement is related to the time which conditions it."[23] This philosophical denigration of space finds its technological counterpart in the many claims made on behalf of railroads, telegraphs, telephones, and other modernizing inventions of ostensibly instantaneous transmission whose breathtaking speed would annihilate all distance. Although the 1903 Edison catalog similarly emphasizes the rapidity of the firefighting apparatus (whose firemen, roused from bed, don "their clothes in the record time of five seconds," and

whose horses "are hitched in the almost unbelievable time of five seconds"), *Life of an American Fireman* visually appears to harken back to the prior medium of magic lantern slide shows, whose "well-developed spatial constructions" lead to action that is "retarded, repeated," as Musser asserts.[24] But at the same time, by so dwelling on portals between spaces otherwise seemingly self-contained, the film opens up new possibilities for the fledgling medium of cinema.

The problematic relation between shots 8 and 9 is almost always discussed in isolation from the rest of the film, but it seems to me directly related to Porter's equally enigmatic opening scene, the fireman's dream. Here we have yet another striking organization of space, as the frame is split into two (by no means a first), with a dream balloon or bubble appearing, screen right, next to a sleeping fireman a few seconds after the film opens (see fig. 14). The scene presents the "life" of the film's title, pushing it beyond mere action—the fire run and rescue so common in the earliest years of cinema—to attempt a richer and more complex biographical subject. Just as the pan in shot 7 signals an ambition to reach a conclusion that goes beyond mere movement, so too the inclusion of the solitary fireman's dream as a prologue to action bespeaks an ambition to give the new medium a subjective dimension. Certainly Porter's turn to biography is not unique here, as late nineteenth-century magic lantern shows such as *Bob the Fireman* also sought to convey the daily routine of a British working-class folk hero.[25] The dream vision too was itself a long-standing visual convention, not only in Western religious paintings but also in secular German drawings from the nineteenth century that anticipated the thought balloons of early-twentieth-century comic strips, as John Fell noted long ago.[26]

Porter himself had invoked such bubbles a few months earlier in his ten-shot *Jack and the Beanstalk,* but to different effect. In his filmed fantasy tale, the balloon is always accompanied by the onscreen presence of a good fairy, who "directs" his dreams for him, as a catalog description puts it.[27] But in the absence of any mediating agents, the bubble in *Life of an American Fireman* is less a phantasmagorical revelation than a more inwardly motivated mental picture. In this regard it is a thought or anxiety balloon rather than a vision or dream—a rather ambitious (if ultimately unsuccessful) attempt by Porter to see how and if the emerging medium of cinema could directly visualize internal psychological states. Here simultaneity makes perfect sense, since we are meant to understand that what we see to the right of the dozing body of the fireman is taking place inside of him—clearly on a different ontological plane even if sharing the same frame. Once the fireman awakes and begins pacing back and forth, the bubble vanishes. As in the

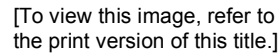

Figure 14. *Life of an American Fireman* (1902–3), shot 1.

film's final two shots, the relation between interior and exterior becomes paramount, and here as there, Porter establishes a kind of spatial causality. He makes it clear that the sleeping body depicted in one space activates another circular space, the tableau of a mother putting her child to bed. The bubble figuratively is about as close to a window as you can get, allowing us to see inside the man's head.[28]

But the material mechanism that allows us to move from outside to inside remains obscure, and the entire film from this point on can be read as an effort by the fireman to realize his vision—that is, to physically reconnect with mother and child. He finally achieves his dream in the film's concluding shot, in effect breaking through the thought balloon's barrier, just as the window is broken in the penultimate shot. In this regard the mother framed by the rectangular window in the final shot recalls the initial circular framing of mother and child by the thought balloon. So we see that Porter's production of space in the film is clearly gendered: mother and child are captured in domestic scenes or vignettes in shots 1, 8, and 9 that render them fixed and static, helplessly waiting for rescue, while the opening scene of the pacing fireman establishes a principle of superabundant masculine energy that serves as the powerful force of preservation and liberation throughout the film.[29]

Juxtaposing manly action against feminine immobility, this gendering of space is intersected by a second pattern in the film that finds both male rescuers and female victim oscillating starkly between two states of being—panicked arousal and unconsciousness—with nothing in between until the end. Just as the fireman in the first shot suddenly awakens with anxiety, and the trapped woman in the penultimate shot conversely passes out in distress when she sees her bedroom on fire, so too the sleeping firemen in shot 3 abruptly jump out of their beds at the sound of the alarm. This third shot thus complicates the film's gendering of space by suggesting a kind of fraternal domesticity (men sleeping together in an intimate setting) subject to the same animating forces that trigger the movements of the fireman and the mother and child he has envisioned. Like *McKinley at Home* (see chapter 1), which merged public and private by giving national politics a domestic framework, so too the professional careers of intrepid firemen, agents of municipal government charged with protecting the city's citizens, become situated within a recognizable familial context. But while the strolling presidential candidate at home is spurred by his reading of important news, what motivates or organizes the official call to duty in *Life of an American Fireman?* A clue lies in the film's second shot.

If the final two shots might occasion complaints today about too much repetition, the first pair seem to give us too little. From an anxiously pacing fireman, we unexpectedly move to a close shot of a disembodied, fragmentary hand and arm opening a fire alarm box and pulling down a handle to sound the telegraphic alarm (see fig. 15). While the first shot gives us some broad sense of the biographical "life" of the fireman, this second shot is essential for more narrowly motivating the chain of action that follows, starting with the firemen awakening in the firehouse (shot 3), moving on to the fire run and rescue, and ending with the reunited mother and child—the iconographic tableau that echoes the opening and gives the film a certain kind of symmetry.[30] Precisely because we never see the fire until the end of the film (unlike Williamson's *Fire!* which explicitly establishes the cause of action in its very first shot), the alarm is all the more crucial for functioning literally as the switch that turns on the plot.

In a superb discussion of *Life of an American Fireman,* Paul Young demonstrates the profound significance of the insert of the alarm, which generates a "technological analogy between telegraph and cinema by placing the spectators in a relationship to the film that parallels the fireman's relationship to the alarm: Both machines not only transmit information about one space into another space, but also bring private subjects out into the open, turning them from singular figures with individual dreams to partic-

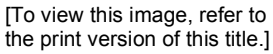

Figure 15. *Life of an American Fireman* (1902–3), shot 2.

ipants in an idealized 'American' experience, broadly defined as everyday heroism for the fireman, and sensationalistic technological amusement for the audience."[31] Young alludes to the collective, nationalizing impulse of the telegraph, a power celebrated early on and often during the rapid growth of the new medium—which the inventor of the municipal telegraphic fire alarm, William F. Channing, himself noted in 1855. The telegraph, he remarked, echoing a host of similar tributes, serves as the "nervous system of the nation and modern society. . . . Its wires spread like nerves over the surface of the land, interlinking distant parts." He goes on to focus on his own more specialized invention: "Its purpose is to multiply points of communication, to cover the surface of the municipal body as thickly . . . with telegraphic signalizing points as the surface of the human body is covered with nervous extremities or papillae."[32]

And so we have three intimately linked spectacular technologies operating in the movie: firefighting, filmmaking, and telegraphy. Describing "Scene 2.—A Close View of a New York Fire Alarm Box," the 1903 Edison catalog spells out the connection between the "apparatus" of the alarm, as the catalog explicitly calls it, and the "wonderful apparatus" of the fire department (men, machines, and horses) by emphasizing "the electric current" that spreads like nerves (to borrow Channing's phrasing) across the

great city to broadcast an alert about the fire.[33] The analogy that Young draws between telegraphy and early cinema thus seems to depend on a third, more abstract force in *Life of an American Fireman*, nowhere to be actually seen in the film (unlike the telegraphic alarm) but governing the organization and arrangement of space itself. Befitting a Thomas Edison production, electricity serves as the invisible medium animating movement, at least for the first three shots, especially between exteriors and interiors. The second close-up shot signals this movement from outer to inner, showing first the alarm box exterior, clearly lettered "Fire Alarm Telegraphy Station," and then a surreal (to us today) arm and hand (the hand of God or the hand of the film director?) opening the door—the first of many throughout the film—to tap the electric current hidden within.[34] Dismembered agency made flesh, the nervous extremity (to recall Channing again) opening the door effectively replays in public fashion the film's more private beginning scene, which also had established in a single shot an exterior, the dreaming fireman, whose anxieties give rise to an interior space, the thought bubble envisioning mother and child.

Lest my comparison between the fireman's head and the fire alarm door seem a bit over the top, let us return to the Edison catalog's account of the first scene, which tells us that the fireman "suddenly awakes and paces the floor in a nervous state of mind, doubtless thinking of the various people who may be in danger from fire at the moment."[35] The fireman's "nervous state of mind" in shot 1 links up with the telegraphic alarm's discharge of electrical nerves depicted in shot 2, establishing a clear and powerful relationship between these two otherwise loosely connected shots by virtue of the wonderful apparatus that homologizes the body of the fireman with the body of the city. No wonder there is no need to show the fire itself. If we look closely again at the first scene, moreover, we notice that there is not just one balloon but two, as the catalog implies: "The rays of an incandescent light rest upon his features with a subdued light, yet leaving his figure strongly silhouetted against the wall of his office."[36] Reading like an advertisement for Edison's most famous product, the incandescent light rays create a visual bubble surrounding the fireman, who in this sense is subject to the same invisible electrical impulses by which he generated his own vision of a family. But then, who dreams the dreamer?

Instead of trying to answer this unanswerable question, let me close with some comments on method. In my argument, I increasingly rely on the 1903 catalog of *Life of an American Fireman* to illuminate the underlying logic of the film—perhaps a dubious proposition. This catalog matches neither the Library of Congress copy nor the Museum of Modern Art copy in

terms of its depiction of action (differing in its rendering of the final two shots, recall), and therefore seems to offer simply a third (print) version with no particular authority. Paul Young, for example, at one point in his discussion somewhat dismissively calls the published account "speculative."[37] But this for me is precisely the point: that the writer of the catalog is not so much describing the film's action as explaining its rationale. Earlier, much briefer production and distribution company catalogs were intended to sell films as well as describe them; but by 1902–3 this selling function was left mainly to advertisements in trade journals like the *New York Clipper,* so that longer, much more extensive and interpretive catalog entries could be written for the film's exhibition, serving in effect as scripts for the live lecture that often accompanied the showing of the film.[38]

While the new medium of cinema in its first decade was slowly moving toward greater diegetic self-sufficiency, it was not quite there yet in 1903, a condition difficult for us now to imagine, as Noël Burch bluntly asserts: "It is so self-evident today that a film must tell its own story that we are often unable to read such narratives."[39] In visualizing the wonderful apparatus of firefighting, *Life of an American Fireman* draws on a whole range of precursor cultural formations, media spectacles, and popular discourses that would have been familiar to audiences of the era: Currier and Ives prints, magic lantern shows, fire run films, and staged outdoor disaster shows, such as the famous "Fighting the Flames" spectacle initially performed during the 1900 Paris Exposition. Yet as Charles Musser remarks, Porter is also attempting to rework this popular material in new ways,[40] especially by experimenting with cinema space, an abstract concern that perhaps outweighed his interest in narrative coherence. I am trying to do two things at once, then: to read the film closely as a carefully crafted whole (more so than some early cinema scholars tend to do), so that the formal difficulties of the double ending are closely related to the film's opening (its thought bubbles and articulation of shots). Second, I am attempting to allow for gaps in the film's story by relying on the printed catalog as a kind of theoretical supplement to fill in by way of explanation what the film itself cannot make fully visible—that is, electricity's special nervous vitality. While the wonderful apparatus tries to comprehend itself in images (the telegraphic alarm shot), we need the words of the catalog to help tell us how it works its magic.

Yet despite my best efforts to make *Life of an American Fireman* seem conceptually coherent, it is not. By the fourth shot, the nervous pacing of the fireman (the first action in the film) has given way to the "thrilling" bursting forth of the horses (which the catalog highlights)—a conversion of

energy from invisible electric currents to more obviously motivated motion through tangible passageways. Instead of regarding the film as a unified entirety governed by a single underlying logic, it makes more sense to treat it as a shifting visual field or series of interlinked experiments whereby Porter tries to imagine how bodies can move through cinematic space, or rather how moving bodies construe new kinds of cinematic space that are not necessarily dependent on time, action, or plot. Creating one-, two-, and three-dimensional effects, the film by fits, starts, and repetitions follows men, machines, and horses moving across streets, up ladders, down poles, and through doors and windows, as interiors and exteriors produce and reproduce one another. I call this process spatial causality, an alternative approach to thinking about the problems of continuity raised by this film.

What are the larger implications of my analysis? For all the attention this film has received, very few commentaries have noted the significance of doors and windows in *Life of an American Fireman*.[41] When portals do come up more generally in discussions of early cinema, the focus tends to be on match cuts (or lack thereof), as scholars, despite themselves, still seem haunted by the terms set by classic Hollywood narrative that we continue to accept as givens. But beyond the mechanics of narrative continuity between shots, the film's preoccupation with windows and doors suggests, more broadly, powerful new ways of imagining cinematic space. Regarding my discussion as only a starting point, others may call for a fuller contextualizing of *Life of an American Fireman* in relation to early cinema as a social practice that entailed rather rich conditions of exhibition, reception, and the formation of counterpublic spheres (see chapter 1). While, on the empirical level, evidence about reception is extremely scanty for this period, certainly on the theoretical level such an approach is warranted in keeping with the recent emphasis on questions of early cinema spectatorship.

For *Life of an American Fireman* more specifically, Paul Young, I have suggested, has made a compelling case for the film's various representations of technological spectacle in relation to American nationalism. Rather than basically reiterate or even expand his claims, I shift the critical conversation back to questions of form, which preoccupied the first generation of serious early cinema scholars during the 1980s, but which have largely fallen by the wayside of late, as if all these technical matters have now been solved. But in trying to situate any medium historically as a new medium, formal issues once assumed to be laid to rest must be revisited with particular care. By examining how the film fuses technique and technology, I have challenged myself to see if Porter's emergent wonderful apparatus linking firefighting,

filmmaking, and telegraphy could sustain the kind of detailed close analysis we devote to literary texts as well as classic Hollywood narratives.

Still others may wonder if I have made one six-minute film carry more critical weight than it can bear. Perhaps. But rather than see this particular film as exemplary or typical of early cinema more generally, I have been careful to respect its singularity, treating it as one multifaceted film at one pivotal moment in cinema history. New media studies work more effectively on a case-by-case basis, not simply in terms of the particular media being analyzed but also in terms of the discrete objects of analysis within any given medium. In a field as complex as early cinema, generalities do not get you far (to paraphrase William Blake). The trick is to pick your new media objects and moments carefully. And here I strongly defend my choice of *Life of an American Fireman*, long regarded as a locus classicus by film historians for its formal peculiarities (especially the double ending and bubble opening) at a key period of transition (1902–3), when self-contained one-shot actualities and trick films were giving way to longer multiple-shot works that exploited the nascent medium's potential for narratization.

Narrative has long been a subject of interest for literary theory and criticism, and insofar as questions of plot may transcend the differences between verbal and visual media, then the critical methods of literary studies offer useful ways to analyze the peculiarities of *Life of an American Fireman*'s efforts at ordering a sequence of shots. As in my previous discussion of suspense, the question here centers on how the new medium of film taught itself to tell stories, specifically the role that repetition played in that process of giving or withholding information. What literary narratologists treat as a problem of coherence, moving the narrative forward through the dialectical interplay between repetition and difference, film scholars treat as continuity, articulating temporal, spatial, and causal relations between a succession of discrete images. Such continuity, for most Hollywood movies at least, would come to reinforce an ideology of mystification designed to render invisible or gloss over the disjunctures, cuts, and artifice of the medium. But for *Life of an American Fireman*, so focused on space and spatial relations, repetition seemed to have an import above and beyond matters of editing efficiency, as Noël Burch has suggested in pondering the relation between the film's final two shots:

> The fact that once these two shots were filmed, it was decided to connect them in a manner implying an obvious non-linearity rather than disturb the unity of the spatial viewpoint, seems to be to say a good deal about the *alterity* of the relationship these early films entertained with

> the spectators who watched them. Does it not suggest that the feeling of being seated in a theatre in front of a screen had, for spectators then, a sort of priority over the feeling of being carried away by an imaginary time-flow, modeled on the semblance of linearity which *ordinary time* has for us?[42]

In linking the space of viewing with the spaces on-screen, Burch implies that early cinema spectators took pleasure in the process of repetition itself—the rescue seen once more, the mother reunited with her child, the nuclear family (real or imagined) restored, showing us once again what we already know. And yet the film seems equally as committed to giving us an exciting beginning, middle, and end, along the lines of hundreds and hundreds of classic Hollywood narratives to come.

This is not an evolutionary linear model of progress, as Porter's subsequent career makes clear. Soon after *Life of an American Fireman*, Porter made *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Slavery Days*, which, in keeping with hugely popular stage versions, presented a series of largely static, iconographic tableaus already familiar to audiences, who were alerted in advance to the emblematic content of each shot by intertitles (among the earliest in cinema). This pictorial, theatrical production was followed by *The Great Train Robbery*, still commonly regarded as the mother of all American film narratives (although to my mind, it is for this reason a less interesting example of new media than *Life of an American Fireman*). But a few years later, in *Life of an American Policeman* (1905)—another film centrally concerned with the official regulation of bodies and the enforcement of social order—as well as *Life of a Cowboy* (1906), Porter makes films (proto-sequels?) that still raise serious questions about temporal and diegetic coherence, as if he had not quite learned or mastered his own lesson in *The Great Train Robbery*—displaying, that is, a seeming disregard of the very narrative conventions he himself had helped to establish. In this specific sense, *Life of an American Fireman* in its various experiments with transmitting persons through space and between shots can be said to encapsulate or stand for the oscillations and equivocations of Porter's career as a whole as he probed the prospects and limitations of nascent moving pictures.

Finally, what would it mean to conceive a cinema based on principles of spatial causality that I have described in *Life of an American Fireman*? It would suggest an abstract mode of representation inviting the eye to follow figures in space rather than cause-and-effect plots. The sheer corporeality of bodies would be foregrounded, yet by the same token the motivation for action might remain beyond the camera's reach, subject to metaphysical forces (such as electricity or gravity) with powerful but invisible presence.

The screen seems to stretch in three-dimensions, not by mimetic illusions of deep focus but rather by passageways soliciting motion back and forth between interiors and exteriors. Time could run forward, backward, stand still, or simply not matter. It may seem now that I am describing the cinematic dream-works of Stan Brakhage, who urged his audiences in his 1963 manifesto "Metaphors on Vision" to "imagine an eye un-ruled by man-made laws of perspective."[43] While I am reluctant to claim Edwin S. Porter as an avant-garde visionary before the letter, I do think it is fair to see both Porter and experimenters like Brakhage as striving to imagine new ways of seeing that in the case of Porter were just beginning to take hold in cinema. But what for Brakhage clearly serves as a bold alternative to an already entrenched mode of filmic representation remains for Porter only one hesitant possibility among many emerging ones. Resituating *Life of an American Fireman* as a new medium that may not have known quite what to make of its own wonderful apparatus, we are in a better position one hundred years later to appreciate that wonder.

Conclusion

The Stilled Body

> I claim that every object, taken from a given viewpoint and shown on the screen to spectators, is a dead object, even though it has moved before the camera.
>
> VSEVOLOD PUDOVKIN (1928)

What happens when the body stops moving? Death may be the mother of beauty, as Wallace Stevens wrote, but it does not seem a promising subject for early cinema, which was premised on corporeal movement. Yet a quick glance at the films discussed in my previous chapters reveals the surprising number of moments, virtually from the new medium's inception, when stasis, unconsciousness, and death punctuate the flow of motion pictures: McKinley pausing to read a telegram, those multiple state funeral processions with his slain presidential body at the center but hidden from view, the graphic execution of the assassin Czolgosz converting animation back into immobility; the frozen subjects of actualities caught by Lumière and Edison cameras; the prone figure at the side of the road that interrupts the frenzy of a police chase; the dreaming fireman, his sleeping cohorts, and the passed-out woman they eventually rouse and rescue.

Before turning to representations of death proper, it makes sense to revisit a set of issues raised in my second chapter, which discussed how figures on-screen initially reacted to being filmed. In his account of being "observed by the lens," Roland Barthes notes, "I feel the Photograph creates my body or mortifies it, according to its caprice,"[1] a response that lets us appreciate how the early movie camera provoked two distinct kinds of bodily reaction: self-conscious displays of exaggerated gesticulation, such as the nearly hysterical waiter watching a game of cards, and the wildly knee-slapping barbershop customer, or (less frequently) moments of inertia and stiffening, such as the glaring Muscovite on the street who remains as motionless as the lamp post next to him. These two modes of address could coexist in a single film like Edison's *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street*, where the staged contingency of a titillating blown skirt is upstaged (literally) by the relentless, planted stare of a curious boy in a brilliant white shirt who refuses to believe

that he is participating in a show (see fig. 6). While the former mode points to the social dynamics of self-presentation and self-rehearsal in relation to others, the latter suggests how the earliest cinema subjects could on occasion view the apparatus (both camera and operator) as a thing in itself rather than as a window on an imagined audience.

These two modes, playing to spectators and ignoring them, correspond closely to the well-known binary between theatricality and absorption that Michael Fried examines in his study of eighteenth-century French painting. In my earlier discussion, I connected enlightenment theories about the origins of poetry and speech with the visualization of sound. Fried too sees Diderot as the central thinker who profoundly reconceived the role of the beholder in theater and painting. Insisting that for Diderot "the human body *in action* was the best picture of the human soul," Fried focuses on the significance of the tableau, the momentary suspension of motion in order to heighten its effects and fix attention, which at the same time paradoxically negates or denies the presence of the viewer.[2] Paintings by Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, and others depict scenes of intense inwardness, reverie, and reflection, where figures remain oblivious to the possibility of being beheld. For such closed scenes of absorption and self-forgetting, the "state of sleep" becomes Fried's "extreme instance or limiting case," an argument that helps gloss the first shot of *Life of an American Fireman*, where Edwin S. Porter experimented with simultaneously showing the fireman dozing and the contents of his dream (see fig. 14).[3] But it seems to me that death or dying marks a more extreme kind of stasis, with the corpse potentially functioning as the ultimate spurning of theatricality.[4]

In this regard Fried's subsequent book on Manet and modernism is illuminating. It is beyond the scope of this conclusion to discuss Fried's extended arguments about how Manet reconstrued the tableau in terms of an intense facingness, rather than a unified closure; how he drew dialectically on photography and Japanese woodblocks; and how he was interested in representing the interplay between speed and stillness—all complex concerns germane to the emergence of cinema later in the century.[5] But it is clear to Fried that Manet and his contemporaries continued to probe the relation between temporality and the beholder previously raised by Diderot. One striking Manet painting that Fried mentions only in passing, *The Dead Toreador* (1864), makes for an interesting comparison with a moment in the 1903 chase film *Daring Daylight Burglary*. As I noted in chapter 3, for an inordinate amount of time the early movie camera halts its recording of an exciting pursuit to dwell on the fate of one still body, that of a policeman who has been thrown (as a stop-action dummy) from a roof.

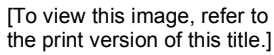

Figure 16. *Daring Daylight Burglary* (1903).

Here in the shot's most intense point of self-contained absorption, on the edge of an otherwise deserted roadside, another policeman bends over the prone figure, presumably unsure whether his comrade is dead or alive, oblivious to the hat in the middle of the road (see fig. 16). Conveying neither grief nor horror, the policeman's intense look signifies a kind of wonder about the state of immobility itself. The awkward disposition of the body, perpendicular to the picture plane, foregrounded head to receding foot, resembles Manet's toreador, who is more radically isolated, solitary except for the flaglike cape he clutches (see fig. 17)—an effect created by Manet's decision to cut the figure from a larger scene he originally painted depicting the lethal bull and the dead matador's fellow bullfighters in the ring. Beyond the complex issue of Manet's sources (which Fried briefly traces) and the strong criticism the painting initially provoked, *The Dead Toreador* is so fascinating because it portrays the corpse as a kind of still life, no longer part of any larger familiar religious or historical framework (such as a famous battle).[6] The painting works as a kind of self-contained close-up depicting the body drained of all vitality just after it has passed from animation to (eternal) repose. The fallen figure in *Daring Daylight Burglary* is clearly less prominent, situated within a much wider space on the periphery of a

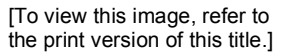

Figure 17. Édouard Manet, *The Dead Toreador* (1864). Widener Collection, image © 2006 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

tree-lined, empty center that withdraws in perspective down the road. But despite the obvious difference in scale, this shot similarly records the sprawled human form as an object of ambiguous significance momentarily evacuated of narrative context, with the addition of an onlooker (equally marginalized) fixed in curious scrutiny.

This frame enlargement from *Daring Daylight Burglary* is not technically a tableau, in that the instant of arrested action lasts only a few seconds before an ambulance arrives to cart the man away, figured on the stretcher with arms rigidly extended, a kind of crucified Christ (see, for instance, Rubens's *Elevation of the Cross*, 1610). But the camera's lingering on the image of the prone policeman does more generally exemplify the importance of pictorial composition in early cinema, a largely neglected concern treated with great care and detail by Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs. As Brewster and Jacobs point out, Fried's notion of a purely absorptive relation between canvas and viewer becomes in fact difficult to maintain once Diderot's crucial distinction between tableaux and coups de théâtre (sudden turns in action) breaks down and blurs in theater practice and criticism by the end of the eighteenth century.[7]

According to Brewster and Jacobs, the tableau, or "stage picture," in theater began to refer more loosely to a cluster of related functions: it was used "to punctuate action, to stress or prolong a dramatic situation, and to give a scene an abstract or quasi-allegorical significance" in ways that early filmmakers began to draw on around 1910.[8] Focusing on staging, composition, and acting in silent feature films, these two scholars do not say much about

earlier films, whose very brevity seems to them to make sustained analysis problematic. But movies like *Daring Daylight Burglary* do offer tableaulike effects, specifically in relation to representations of death, which Brewster and Jacobs do not discuss. In their analysis of Edwin S. Porter's *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Slavery Days* (1903), for example, they show how the film closely resembles nineteenth-century stage versions in its use of intertitles identifying a series of fourteen familiar and highly conventional tableaux, such as the escape of Eliza, and Tom and Eva in the garden.

Yet in remarking that the film version, unlike the play, had no "prolonged freezes" or static poses, they seem to neglect the fact that so many of these fixed camera, single-shot scenes feature scenes of death or dying in which the stationary corpse is prominently highlighted as an object of contemplation or grief.[9] Beyond the shooting deaths of two slavers (scenes 4 and 13), we see St. Claire die in a duel (scene 10) and the iconic deaths of Tom (the final scene, 14) and Eva, whose lifeless body is lifted into heaven by an angel (scene 9), a gesture that is prefigured by two earlier scenes (6 and 8) that also show her limp body carried by others. We can add a number of other scenes where figures are frozen as statues, such as the slave auction (scene 11); the moment Tom raises a whip but refuses to flog Emaline; where he is himself flogged, Christ-like, with his back toward the camera while Emaline falls and lies motionless on the ground; and where Cassy raises the whip against Legree. Brewster and Jacobs call this scene's final pose a "truncated" tableau, but I argue that the sheer duration of the period in which this group of five figures is fixed and held in space (a full nine seconds)—anchored and tied together by the horizontal prone body of Emaline across the bottom of the frame—qualifies it precisely as an expressive tableau composed to elicit a certain kind of attention from the film's spectators.[10]

In a more theoretical vein, Jay Caplan has amplified and extended Fried's arguments about the beholder by suggesting that for Diderot the tableau is also a *tombeau* (tomb).[11] Without going into the details of Caplan's psychoanalytic reading, I find his discussion of the tableau as Diderot's aesthetic grounds for sacrifice useful for shedding light on the way many of these early films use dead or still bodies to suspend time. Probing the function of the tableau for Diderot, Caplan cites Deleuze on the fetish: "The fetish is therefore not a symbol at all, but as it were a frozen, arrested, two-dimensional image, a photograph to which one returns repeatedly to exorcise the dangerous consequences of movement."[12] Given the photographic basis for cinema's moving image, this sense of the tableau as a "fetishistic snapshot" seems especially suggestive for our own concerns.

The association between death and photography has a long history, cul-

minating perhaps in Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida.* As I have already suggested, for Barthes the moment the photo is snapped entails the self-mortification of the subject: "*Life / Death:* the paradigm is reduced to a simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final print."[13] "Whether or not the subject is already dead," he continues, "every photograph is this catastrophe" (96). Yet the photograph for Barthes remains moribund not because of the fixity or falsity of the image; rather, photography always marks a "return of the dead" (9) by virtue of the absolute indexicality of the medium, which, he emphasizes, must always leave traces of past reality. To paraphrase the Pudovkin epigraph that prefaces this conclusion, photographic bodies are dead for Barthes precisely *because* they once moved before the camera. Against the tendency in contemporary French thought to regard images as sheer phantasmagoria, Barthes insists: "Photography's referent is not the same as the referent of other systems of representation. I call 'photographic referent' not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph. . . . In Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. . . . The name of Photography's *noeme* will therefore be: "That-has-been," or again: the Intractable" (76–77, italics in the original).[14]

Given that film shares this same basis in photographic realism, it would be reasonable to assume that it too is equally haunted by death, but Barthes argues otherwise:

> The Photograph's *noeme* deteriorates when this Photograph is animated and becomes cinema: in the Photograph, something *has posed* in front of the tiny hole and has remained there forever (that is my feeling); but in cinema, something *has passed* in front of this same tiny hole: the pose is swept away and denied by the continuous series of images. . . . Photography's inimitable feature (its *noeme*) is that someone has seen the referent (even if it is a matter of objects) *in flesh and blood. . . .* [By contrast] the (fictional) cinema combines two poses: the actor's "this-has-been" and the role's. (Italics in the original, 78–79)

The first and last parenthetical asides in the above passage are especially telling. By adding "that is my feeling" Barthes suggests that, despite the term *noeme,* this is not an ontological definition of the medium but an affect-oriented one that depends on the subjective relation between a particular image and a particular viewer, somewhat along the lines of Fried's thesis (published the same year) about Diderot's "supreme fiction": how the tableau paradoxically both implies and negates its beholder. This is why, to invoke *Camera Lucida*'s famous distinction, the *punctum* that Barthes

detects in a single old photograph of his mother as a child remains only a *studium* for the rest of us, why he refuses to reproduce this image for his readers. Second, perhaps more revealing for my purposes, Barthes's struggle to distinguish photography from movies, to deny film "the certificate of presence" (87) and therefore the loss and morbidity he finds in the still photo, depends on a specific *kind* of cinema—fictional narratives made up of actors playing clearly demarcated roles.

But these self-contained narratives are precisely what the early cinema body does not yet fully yield, as I have emphasized throughout. As for his distinction between "posing" before the lens and "passing through" it, this too remains problematic, if not downright confusing. Such a contrast seems to rest on profilmic events taking place in front of the camera. But clearly photographs can record bodies in motion (although all of Barthes's examples are posed portraits). Movies conversely can record still bodies, as my discussion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* demonstrates. As Philip Rosen has suggested, the distinction between posing and passing through has more to do with the act of beholding—the fact that we can view still photographs as objects of contemplation in ways that cinema's temporal flow apparently does not allow us to experience.[15]

But even here the distinction proves elusive, as Garrett Stewart has shown in his remarkable study *Between Film and Screen*. Arguing mightily and often brilliantly against the commonsense phenomenology that treats moving images as images of movement and duration, as a becoming into being, Stewart seeks to restore the material trace of the single photogram at the heart of cinema, the separate celluloid film imprint, banished from ordinary consciousness, that nonetheless continually makes itself felt in movie freeze frames; in the photographs that figure crucially in films such as *The Shining* and *Blade Runner*, to cite two of his many examples; and during various cinematic scenes (seens) of death. Even Deleuze comes into question for finally basing his analysis of cinema's temporality "*as it appears to view*."[16] Although my own readings of corporeality in early movies may suffer from a similar misapprehension (as Stewart would have it), I am indebted to his striking account of "the structural force of the death scene in levering open the entire cinematic system" (153). Stewart argues that "in the invented material transformations of photography into cinema, the human body becomes the switch point between a discredited metaphysics of presence [pace Barthes] and an installed psychology of reception" (ix), presumably starting with the 1916 theorizing of neo-Kantian Hugo Münsterberg about how viewers mentally, emotionally, and physically process photoplays.[17] Just as Stewart seeks in effect to reverse the direction

of this "switch point" by reinstalling mortification at (and as) the base of motion pictures, I similarly have sought to restore the human body as the representational logic formally driving these films, beyond driving the visceral reactions of the spectators. And if any distinction is to be made between the two media, Stewart suggests, it is mainly between "death in replica" and a "dying away in progress": "The isolated photo or photogram is the still work of death; cinema is death always still at work" (xi). In this regard cinema serves to perpetually postpone revealing the corpse that photographs inevitably instantiate.

We can narrow the gap another way by simply thinking about photography and film as comparable kinds of storage media. This is akin to the approach of André Bazin, who famously proclaimed that photographs "embalm[ed] time," while cinema, photographing duration, in turn produced "change mummified," the natural endpoint of a long-standing desire of "the plastic arts" to defeat death and the passage of time by preserving "the continued existence of the corporeal body."[18] Despite the obvious teleological thrust of Bazin's argument, his case for a sacred "mummy complex" at the core of artistic endeavor from the ancient Egyptians onward deserves serious consideration, especially in relation to contemporaneous accounts of photography and cinema as these technologies initially emerged during the nineteenth century. When we turn to a historical examination of photographs and film as new media, in other words, we discover death everywhere from the start. As if he had Bazin in mind, for instance, Dominique François Arago, in an 1839 report to the French Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, hailed the new invention of Daguerre as especially important for the national enterprise of recording with great precision the remains of dead civilizations, especially "the millions of hieroglyphics which cover even the exterior of the great monuments of Thebes, Memphis, Karnak, and others."[19] In a less grandiose effort to capture corporeal traces of a more immediate past, one of William Henry Fox Talbot's earliest productions (from 1835) was a photograph of his own handwriting, the alphabet. So much for the Pencil of Nature.[20] And a few years later (1840), Hippolyte Bayard produced an extraordinary series of photographic portraits of himself as a drowned man.[21] It is not simply that dead persons were easier to capture because they stood (or slumped) still, as is often remarked of Mathew Brady's Civil War shots, and it is not simply that Victorian photographers frequently commemorated the deceased (particularly children) by taking their pictures as family keepsakes: death seems more profoundly both subject and object of these images.

I can multiply these examples nearly endlessly, but let me single out one

more. Calling photography "*the mirror with a memory,*" Oliver Wendell Holmes followed up this happy phrase, coined in an 1859 *Atlantic Monthly* article on the three-dimensional illusions of the stereograph (his own invention), with a subsequent essay that purported to give readers a virtual tour of Europe via a "stereoscopic trip across the Atlantic."[22] Near the opening of the piece, before he starts his tour by looking at image after image, Holmes materially links photographs and eternity in a by-then perfectly commonplace, if slightly creepy, fashion: "It is hardly too much to say, that those whom we love no longer leave us in dying, as they did of old. They remain with us just as they appeared in life; they look down upon us from our walls; they lie upon our tables; they rest upon our bosoms. . . . The unfading artificial retina which has looked upon them retains their impress, and a fresh sunbeam lays this on the living nerve as if it were radiated from the breathing shape. How these shadows last, and how the originals fade away!" (14). What begins as a celebration of immortality ends up, via that "as if," with Holmes, as mournful as Barthes, reminding us that our body's "breathing shape" is indeed transitory, a fact he later underscores by describing in some detail the photograph of an inscription on a tombstone—"the black archives of oblivion" (25), he poetically calls it, thus literally rendering the stereographic image a kind of grave.[23]

When we turn from this early reception of photography to consider moving images later in the century, we find that the older technology of the still photograph was invoked, as we might expect, in order to emphasize by contrast the vitality of cinema. In 1892, for instance, Marey's colleague Georges Demenÿ predicted: "The future will replace the static photograph, fixed in its frame, with the animated portrait that will be given life with a turn of the wheel."[24] Early exhibition practice reinforced this impression, with the Lumière brothers opening their shows with a projected frozen image that then suddenly and mysteriously seemed to spring to life once their cinématographe (no mere magic lantern) began cranking and the image started to move.[25] Newspaper accounts of the 1896 Biograph debut (see chapter 1) similarly emphasized the lifelike if uncanny embodiment of McKinley as he strolled onscreen toward the audience.

Yet even in these first responses to motion pictures, which (among many other names) were initially called "Living Photographs," a peculiar kind of rigor mortis would still seem to quickly set in. Once viewers regarded the new medium as fulfilling the same recording function as the daguerreotype, they reintroduced a familiar anxiety that they sometimes might ostensibly deny with a kind of reckless bravado: "It is life itself, it is movement captured on the spot. . . . When such gadgets are in the hands of the public,

when anyone can photograph the ones who are dear to them, not just in their immobile form, but with movement, action, familiar gestures, and the words out of their mouths, death will no longer be absolute, final."[26] What sort of death is not absolute? Another account, penned in response to the same first public showing of a Lumière film, on December 25, 1895, made the connection between death and life more directly: "We already can collect and reproduce words; now we can collect and reproduce life. We might even, for instance, see those of our friends or family as if living once more long after they have disappeared."[27]

Startled by the "life" of the moving image ("as if"), first viewers immediately conjured up the dearly departed—musing on the past or projecting into the future to mortify themselves: "Our descendants, in distant centuries, will be able to listen to our voices and determine from our behavior, engraved on the kinetograph, whether or not they have the least resemblance to their ancestors."[28] Note that all three of these quotations refer to (spoken) words, so that the still photograph–moving image analogy is mediated by the intervention of another sort of storage device, the phonograph, as I discussed in the interlude. No surprise, then, that we discover the same sort of preoccupation with death in early responses to sound reproduction shortly after it was introduced by Edison in 1877. In an intriguing chapter titled "A Resonant Tomb," Jonathan Sterne examines this fixation, cataloguing the multitude of ways that the "voices of the dead" were associated with the new medium, from the trademark dog Nipper, who in print advertisements was portrayed as hearing "his master's voice" apparently from atop his coffin, to various claims about the immortalizing power of the invention, which would, for example, "allow our great grandchildren or posterity centuries hence [to] hear us as plainly as if we were present."[29] In his eagerness to culturally contextualize these morbid associations, Sterne points to the late Victorian fascination with death. But to link the phonographic voices of the dead to such specific preservation practices as the canning of food and the embalming of corpses (without any reference to Bazin) risks perhaps an overly hasty sort of historicizing. Of course the funerary rites of ancient Egyptians burying their divine Pharaohs differed significantly from the "bourgeois modernity," as Sterne calls it, available to middle-class Victorians.[30] And yet the impulse to embalm was shared by both in ways that suggest a larger set of aspirations and anxieties centering on the fate of the body within a wide range of representational systems across time. "As if we were present": by modifying only a few words here and there, this hope or dream or desire applies equally well to photography in 1839, phonography in 1877, and cinematography in 1895.

Bazin associated this "mummy complex" with the plastic arts (painting and sculpture) and then photography and finally cinema. While we might extend his insights to include the tableau in theater (pace Diderot) and phonography (pace Sterne), other nonvisual nineteenth-century technologies like the telephone and the telegraph also seem to dwell inordinately in and on death. Jeffrey Sconce, for instance, has usefully branded telegraphy a "haunted" medium, analyzing the close popular affiliation between telegraphic transmission and spirit rapping of the 1840s, when people commonly thought the new invention might help them get in touch with the spirits of the deceased.[31] For good measure we could add the curious fact that the earliest known depiction of a print shop, from 1499, shows skeletons engaged in a dance of death, as Friedrich Kittler has noted.[32] Dancing skeletons also appear on the earliest-known animated slides of the magic lantern invented by Christiaan Huygens in 1659. Describing these pictures, Laurent Mannoni remarks, "Huygens knew how to bring movement to an image projected onto a screen: paradoxically, this first illuminated artificial recreation of life was a representation of death."[33]

Mannoni is obviously onto something, but his notion of paradox does not get us very far. The yoking of death and life (neatly exemplified by dancing skeletons) seems more fundamental than that, deeper than a memento mori or a desire to communicate with the departed. It is not simply that the recording apparatus outlives the mortal bodies it reproduces, as the emphasis on representation as storage or preservation would have it. Whether by acoustics or optics, on stage or screen, the vulnerability of the body to time becomes the primary apprehension linking the beholder to the elusive humans who have been so tracked and mediated. While the origins of painting and theater are shrouded in the past, we can more clearly see this apprehension by turning to the newer technologies that emerged during the nineteenth-century.

Once again, Sterne's work proves invaluable. In the chapter directly preceding "A Resonant Tomb," Sterne devotes a great deal of attention to what he calls "the social genesis of sound fidelity"—that is, the obsessive (and futile) quest of early practitioners and listeners to arrive at a pure verisimilitude: to experience sound as a perfectly transparent medium, which is, in effect, no medium at all.[34] Like cinema apparatus theorists in the 1970s who suggested that Hollywood narratives work to erase material traces of their own disunity and ideological construction, Sterne posits a similar logic for the early days of sound reproduction by which fidelity trumped all other considerations. Yet he subsequently fails to connect his powerful analysis of

this will to "being lifelike" or "true to nature" to the preoccupation with the "voices of the dead" that he so eloquently details in his following chapter. Fidelity and death largely remain separate issues in his account, when in fact they are intimately coupled, two sides of the same corporeal coin. This seems especially apparent during the medium's initial emergence, before being taken for granted, when its very newness and mimetic potential were the triggers for a kind of dread that gradually grew fainter as the medium became naturalized and utilitarian. Hardly anyone is haunted by the disembodied voice of Frank Sinatra today when playing a CD, or feels extreme disquiet at singing or speaking into a microphone. But at the turn of the twentieth century, when the stakes were higher, sound reproduction could occasion such dread, as Sterne surmises: "Perhaps the frightening aspect of the process, then, was that, in recording, the performers felt obliged to contemplate their own deaths."[35]

So too for the first decade of cinema, perhaps not so much from the perspective of performers (since many figures on-screen were not actors per se), but rather of spectators and filmmakers, who unconsciously registered this apprehension by sometimes suspending the animating magic of the apparatus, "life itself" or "movement taken from life," to recall one entranced 1895 viewer, in order to dwell on the body immobilized. New media seem always to entail an uneasy sort of stillbirth. Even taken as provisional, this proposition I hope is not too grandiose, coming as it does near the end of a conclusion of a book primarily dedicated to the early cinema body in motion, not stasis. But it helps explain a film like *Execution of Czolgosz* (1901). Is it any wonder that, roughly five years after introducing the vitascope (note the name), the Edison Manufacturing Company would fabricate a movie that ran the cinematic process in reverse, from life to death, using the power of electricity now to take away what it had previously learned to incarnate? The electric "body shot" taken of Czolgosz, and, more gruesomely *by* him, strapped in a chair, witnesses bending near to watch, represents the surge of current that runs throughout early motion pictures, a life force and a death force.

Near the close of *Between Film and Screen*, Stewart moves backward through a series of milestones of modernity:

> Older than the physics of relativity, older than the mass visual media, older than the Fordist assembly line, older than automatic weaponry, older than stereography, phonography, or mechanized typography, older than the locomotive transformation of landscape vistas, older than photography, older than cognitive shifts in the sketchbook tradition, older than

> automata research, older than a calculus of intervals, older than experimental optics, older than the invention of silent reading, older than the Machine itself, older than the world view attached to Plato's cave and even of the first pictographic montage of the first cave draftsmen—antedating all is the birth of art out of ritual practice, art as a sublimation of primal violence. To this the photogram in its own way reverts.[36]

After such a fabulous, comprehensive list, Stewart's endpoint and origin is a bit anticlimactic: when we read the vague phrases "ritual practice" and "primal violence" are we supposed to think of Freud's patricidal horde in *Totem and Taboo,* or what? Bazin helps a little here, tracing "the creation of an ideal world in the likeness of the real" to ancient Egyptian religion, specifically the desire to defeat or overcome death.[37] Meditating on photography, Roland Barthes takes us closer still:

> We know the original relation of the theater and the cult of the Dead: the first actors separated themselves from the community by playing the role of the Dead: to make oneself up was to designate oneself as a body simultaneously living and dead: the whitened bust of the totemic theater, the man with the painted face in the Chinese theater, the rice-paste makeup of the Indian Katha-Kali, the Japanese No mask. . . . Now it is this same relation which I find in the Photograph; however "life-like" we strive to make it (and this frenzy to be lifelike can only be our mythic denial of an apprehension of death), photography is a kind of primitive theater, a kind of *Tableau Vivant,* a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead.[38]

That face—and body—may be more difficult to see in early cinema, but it is there.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. See Dan Streible, *Fight Pictures: A History of Boxing and Early Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming).

2. Marcel Mauss, "Body Techniques," in *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 95–123.

3. For feminist discussions of the body that have informed my thinking, see Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996); Gail Weiss, *Body Images* (New York: Routledge, 1999); and most especially Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). For women's bodies specifically in early cinema, see Lucy Fischer, "The Lady Vanishes: Women, Magic, and the Movies," *Film Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 30–40; and Karen Beckman, *Vanishing Women: Magic, Film, and Feminism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003). For early cinema and race, see Daniel Bernardi, ed., *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996); and Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

4. Geoffrey O'Brien, "He Walked with a Zombie," review of *The Val Lewton Horror Collection* (DVD box set) and *Icons of Grief: Val Lewton's Home Front Pictures*, by Alexander Nemerov, *New York Review of Books* 53, no. 4 (March 9, 2006): 30.

5. For an important account of body gesture in early cinema that anticipates some of my own concerns, see Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk, " 'Levant les bras au ciel, se tapant sur les cuisses': Réflexions sur le geste dans le cinéma des premiers temps," in *Cinéma sans frontières/Images across Borders*, ed. Roland Cosandey and François Albera (Lausanne: Editions Payot Lausanne, 1995), 133–

45. The notion of a rhetoric of the body goes back at least to Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, bks. 9–10, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001). Discussing the concept of "figure," Quintilian makes an analogy between "any shape in which a thought is expressed" and "our bodies, in whatever pose they are placed" as both presenting "*some* sort of attitude" (15). In the eighteenth century, this idea of corporeal rhetoric was systematized by various writers who emphasized the importance of delivery. See Philippa M. Spoel, "The Science of Bodily Rhetoric in Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia*," *Rhetorical Society Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 5–27. For a useful (if somewhat outdated) survey of scholarship on the body in relation to rhetorical theory, see Randi Patterson and Gail Corning, "Researching the Body: An Annotated Bibliography for Rhetoric," *Rhetorical Society Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 5–29. See also Debra Hawhee, *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

6. Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). My use of the term *materiality* to describe images of bodies may seem idiosyncratic, but I do so to go beyond narrowly literal accounts of cinema's materiality strictly in terms of the physical properties of camera, projector, celluloid, and so on.

7. See Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), and her previous book *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), and *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Mark B. N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004); as well as Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

8. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, esp. 130–37.

9. See Richard Abel, *The Cine Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), and *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) and *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde," reprinted in *Space, Frame, Narrative* (among other volumes), ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Barker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 56–62. The term *cinema of attractions* was introduced in a collaborative paper delivered by André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning in 1985: "Le cinema des premiers temps: Un défi à l'histoire du cinéma?" subsequently published in *His-*

toire du cinéma: Nouvelles approaches, ed. Jacques Aumont, André Gaudreault, and Michel Marie (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1989), 49–63.

10. Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator," *Art and Text* 34 (Spring 1989), reprinted in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 818–32; and in *Viewing Positions,* ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995). Since Gunning's essay is short, I have not bothered to give specific page numbers for citations.

11. Gunning, "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life,* ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 32–34, 41. His discussion of *A Subject for the Rogue's Gallery* begins on p. 27. In a later essay, Gunning offers a far more dynamic assessment of the early cinema body, but here too he takes his conceptual framework from modernity and modernism, specifically symbolism and futurism. See "Loie Fuller and the Art of Motion," in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson,* ed. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 75–89. For yet another of his essays that makes an important contrast between "the regulated rhythms of highly trained bodies" in Muybridge and Marey motion studies, versus "the more casual bodily postures of everyday life" captured in Lumière films (90), see Tom Gunning, "New Thresholds of Vision: Instantaneous Photography and the Early Cinema of Lumière," in *Impossible Presence: Surface and Screen in the Photographic Era,* ed. Terry Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 71–100. As evidenced especially in chapters 1, 3, 4, I too am interested in how early cinematic incarnation often specifically entailed the social and spatial management of threatened or recalcitrant bodies (both male and female), but my approach does not rest on large-scale assumptions about modernity as a determining force. For an interesting discussion of the modernist mechanics of dance in relation to early cinema, see Felicia McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

12. For an engaging critique of this model of cultural studies that tries to fix its subjects within a grid of difference, see Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 1–21. The differences between *A Subject for the Rogue's Gallery* and *Photographing a Female Crook* are small but telling: in the former the subject first turns her back to the camera while taking off her jacket, and is tightly held in place by a policeman and a detective, whereas in *Photographing a Female Crook* the photographer himself also helps restrain the woman (who acts angrier and wilder than in the other version), thereby giving up the pretense that the still camera is taking her picture.

13. See Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 157–83; and Constance Balides, "Scenarios of Exposure in the Practice of Everyday Life: Women in the Cinema of Attractions," *Screen* 34, no. 1 (1993): 19–37.

14. See the chapter on "Somatic Experience" in Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 157–77.

15. Linda Williams, "Film Body: An Implantation of Perversions," *Cine-Tracts* no. 12 (Winter 1981): 19–35, reprinted in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology,* ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 509. Williams expands her analysis of Muybridge in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), where she remarks: "The desire to see and know more of the human body—in this case, to answer 'academic questions' of the mechanics of body movement—underlines the very invention of cinema" (36). See also Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 2–13. Given my interest in embodiment, it may seem curious that I devote only scant attention to the films of Méliès throughout this study, but the magician's visual tricks of transformation, either the substitution of one body for another, or the sudden appearance and disappearance of bodies, generally depend on relatively static representations of space and motion—their relationship—that I find less interesting than those films I do closely examine.

16. Such scholarly interest is usually dated from a meeting of the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film held in Brighton, England, in 1978. It is worth noting how this resurgence of concern for early cinema was initially triggered by archival preservation and definition.

17. An early insight by Roland Barthes is telling in this regard: "The more a system is specifically defined in its forms, the more amenable it is to historical criticism. To parody a well-known saying, I shall say that a little formalism turns one away from History, but that a lot brings one back to it." *Mythologies,* trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 112.

18. Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 18–19.

19. James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 22–23. To reinforce the idea of autographic inscription, Lastra includes a nineteenth-century drawing of a vibrating fork producing a record of its movements, but here too the illustration seems to betray its intention by including an uncanny disembodied hand that points to the marks being made by the fork.

20. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 50.

21. Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 5, 30, 116. Lastra's emphasis on autoinscription is more concerned with the body as operator (or nonoperator) of technology, whereas Leder's phenomenological framework focuses on (self)perception, but the two issues are closely linked. For other approaches to studying corporeality, see Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, eds., *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991); and Gunther Knoblich, Ian M. Thornton, Marc Grosjean, and Maggie Shiffrar, eds. *Human*

Body Perception from the Inside Out (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

22. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, and the Archive* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 61.

23. Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 88. On Marey, see Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 12–13, 23–26, 32–38. Although Cartwright's Foucauldian emphasis on the body as an object of scientific interest differs from my own concerns, she (along with Williams) is one of the few scholars of early cinema and other visual technologies who puts the body front and center.

24. Leder, *The Absent Body*, 36–68.

25. See Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 196.

26. The two Marey quotations are cited in Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 94, 90.

27. Quoted by Leder, *The Absent Body*, 20.

1. LOOKING IN: McKINLEY AT HOME

Epigraph: W. K. L. Dickson and Antonia Dickson, *The Life and Inventions of Thomas Alva Edison* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1894), 319.

1. For an interesting discussion of a previous film with clear political implications, Edison's *The Monroe Doctrine* (April 1896), see Charles Musser, "Nationalism and the Beginnings of Cinema: The Lumière Cinématographe in the United States, 1896–1897," *Historical Journal of Radio, Film, and Television* 19 (June 1999): 149–76.

2. See, for instance, Daniel Aaron, "Theodore Roosevelt as Cultural Artifact," *Raritan* 9, no. 3 (1990): 109–26. Technically, Grover Cleveland, who appeared in several 1897 inauguration shots, was the first president on film, since in 1896 McKinley was not yet president.

3. For one such collection of essays, see Theresa De Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980).

4. Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 162–67. Of particular interest is a passage Musser cites from Harry Marvin, Biograph's vice president, from 1901: "In building up our business we were of the opinion at first that what the public would desire would be a series of finished and artistic pictures representing a scene or event of historic interest or artistic value[,] . . . but we soon found that the public demanded of us the prompt and reliable service of the daily newspaper. . . . The public has expected us to gather the news in a pictorial way and disseminate it at once" (163). Musser borrows the term "visual newspaper" from Robert C. Allen, "Contra the Chaser Theory," *Wide Angle* 3, no. 1 (1979): 4–11; reprinted in John Fell, ed., *Film before Griffith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 105–15.

5. Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 338.

6. For a discussion of Lubin, see Joseph P. Eckhardt, *The King of the Movies: Film Pioneer Siegmund Lubin* (Madison, N.J.: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998).

7. Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911–1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 47.

8. James W. Carey, "Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph," in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 204. I have reversed the order of Carey's phrases.

9. Harold Innes, "Technology and Public Opinion in the United States," in *The Bias of Communications* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), 171.

10. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Modern Library, 1931), 5.

11. I don't mean to suggest that early cinema served as an alternative to newspapers; rather, it was primarily a supplement. It is also worth pointing out that, at the point of reception, newspapers are more portable and mobile than films, which require fixed spaces for exhibition.

12. Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

13. See, for instance, Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

14. Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New York: Macmillan, 1927).

15. Thomas C. Leonard, *News for All* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 101.

16. For discussions of the Democratic campaign strategy, see Stanley Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 297–317; Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 278–82; and Kevin Phillips, *William McKinley* (New York: Henry Holt, 2003), 73–85.

17. See H. Wayne Morgan, *William McKinley and His America*, rev. ed. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2003), 160–89, which draws heavily on the interesting diary of campaign manager Charles G. Dawes, *A Journal of the McKinley Years* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1950). Dawes offers detailed accounts of the Republican Party's massive spending during the campaign—amounts that were not topped until the 1920 presidential race.

18. Cited in H. W. Brands, *The Reckless Decade* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 267.

19. Innes, *The Bias of Communication*, 178–79.

20. Gil Troy, *See How They Ran: The Changing Role of the Presidential Candidate* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 5.

21. William Jennings Bryan, *First Battle* (Chicago: Conkey, 1896), 299.

22. Ibid., 618. This percentage is not as high as it might seem at first glance, since Bryan's audience estimate included women and children, who were clearly

not eligible to vote. Of course, not every man who heard Bryan would necessarily have voted for him over McKinley.

23. Cited in Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970), 73.

24. Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1987).

25. On September 23, 1896, the Edison Company shot a brief film of Bryan campaigning. See Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 244 (entry #233). But as Musser himself points out in another context, such a film did not necessarily function to celebrate the Democratic candidate, since it might have elicited negative as well as positive reactions from the cinema audience. See Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 69.

26. Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926), 216. See also G. W. Bitzer, *Billy Bitzer: His Story* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1973). 11. For an account of Abner supervising movie cameramen during the filming of his brother's 1897 inauguration, see Margaret Leech, *In the Days of McKinley* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 118.

27. For an interesting discussion of this film that emphasizes converging business and political interests, see Paul C. Spehr, "McKinley Moves—Republicans Cheer! America's First Political Media Event," in *"The Story of the Century!": An International Newsfilm Conference*, ed. Clyde Jeavons, Jane Mercer, and Daniela Kirchner (London: British Universities Film and Video Council, 1998), 63–71.

28. See Bitzer, *Billy Bitzer*, 11–23. A description of the filming can also be found in Gordon Hendricks, *Beginnings of the Biograph: The Story of the Invention of the Mutoscope and the Biograph and Their Supplying Camera* (New York: Arno, 1964), 41–44.

29. This 1896 article as well as others describing Biograph's debut are usefully reprinted in Kemp Niver, ed., *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908* (Los Angeles: Locare Research Group, 1968), 13–20. Unlike the pretense by today's press of relative impartiality, newspapers at the turn of the twentieth century were very open about their political allegiances.

30. Quoted in Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 111. For information on Ida McKinley and her role during the 1896 campaign, see also Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *First Ladies* (New York: Morrow, 1990), 282–84; and Robert P. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives: Reassessing the Office of First Lady* (Boulder, Colo.: Rienner, 2000), 84–85.

31. Bitzer, *Billy Bitzer*, 11–12.

32. See program description cited in Hendricks, *Beginnings of the Biograph*, 49.

33. Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 193–296. See also Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

34. Program cited in Hendricks, *Beginnings of the Biograph*, 48–49.

35. For a similar pairing juxtaposing McKinley with a fire rescue, see Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 152. While Musser reads the pairing allegorically, seeing McKinley as coming to the rescue of the country, I am more interested in how the candidate and the locomotive share a common appeal to visceral sensation. For an analysis of the cultural significance of the railroad in relation to early American cinema, see Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997). Kirby points out that, just as railroad lines subsidized the delegations who visited McKinley at home, they also subsidized filmmakers, who traveled in exchange for shots of trains that advertised various railway lines.

36. *New York Telegram*, October 15, 1896, cited in Niver, *Biograph Bulletins*.

37. *New York Mail and Express*, October 17, 1896, cited in Niver, *Biograph Bulletins*.

38. There is a growing interest in examining such late-nineteenth-century spectacles of popular culture in relation to theories of modernity proposed by Walter Benjamin and others. For one important collection of essays, see Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), particularly essays by Ben Singer, Jeannene M. Przyblyski, and Vanessa Schwartz. See also Andrea Stalman Denett and Nina Warnke, "Disaster Spectacle at the Turn of the Century," *Film History* 4 (1990): 101–11. The myth of the cowering first film spectator was initially questioned by Dai Vaughan, "Let Their Be Lumière," reprinted in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Barker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 63–67; and more recently by Stephen Bottomore, "The Panicking Audience? Early Cinema and the 'Train Effect,'" *Historical Journal of Radio, Film, and Television* 19 (June 1999): 177–216.

39. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde," "Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity: A Theory of Genres in Early Films," and "'Primitive' Cinema: A Frame-Up? Or, the Trick's on Us," all reprinted in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Barker (London: British Film Institute, 1990); see also Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator," reprinted in Linda Williams, ed., *Viewing Positions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 114–33, and Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1994): 189–201. For an interesting response to this last article, see Charles Musser, "Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1994): 203–31.

40. In order of citation, these accounts, all published in 1896, are from the *Dramatic Mirror*, October 24 (reprinted in Hendricks, *Beginnings of the Biograph*, 49); and the *New York Mail and Express*, October 13, the *New York Tribune*, October 13, the *New York Advertiser*, October 21, the *Baltimore Ameri-*

can, November 3, the *New York Times,* October 21, the *New York Herald,* November 1, and the *New York Times,* October 13. All accounts, with the exception of the first one, can be found in Niver, *Biograph Bulletins*.

41. *New York Herald,* November 4, 1896.

42. Harold Innes, "The Press, a Neglected Factor in the Economic History of the Twentieth Century," in *Changing Concepts of Time* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), 102.

43. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* trans. Thomas Burger, with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 171. For an important collection of essays on the public sphere, see Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

44. This phrase is from Catherine Gallagher, "Marxism and the New Historicism," in *The New Historicism,* ed. H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 43. See also Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), esp. "Reading as Poaching" (165–76).

45. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); see also her foreword to *Public Sphere and Experience,* by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge; trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

46. I offer a highly condensed account here. Fiction narratives began to dominate around 1903–4, but they tend not to function as fully self-contained until a few years later. For a more extended analysis of this ascendancy, see Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Noël Burch labels this classic cinematic storytelling "Institutional Mode of Representation" or "IMR" for short. See Burch, *Life to Those Shadows,* trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). The definitive discussion of classical Hollywood cinema remains David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristen Thompson, *The Classic Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

47. For an important Lacanian analysis of such voyeurism, see Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

48. In an intriguing essay, Miriam Hansen seeks to link early cinema spectatorship with recent developments in video and cable TV that would seem to spell the end of the dominance of classic Hollywood narrative. Yet I question her effort to connect pre- and post-Hollywood cinema, in that these contemporary modes of viewing seem far more privatized than early films' public screenings. See "Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere," in *Viewing Positions,* ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 134–52.

49. With the introduction around 1906 of inexpensive nickelodeon houses devoted strictly to showing films, cinema spectatorship began to appeal to immi-

grants and working classes, as opposed to the more middle-class audiences, who tended to frequent vaudeville venues. See Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 61–68 and 93–95.

50. Paul Young has recently taken issue with aspects of my reading of the McKinley film's reception, especially my argument that the vaudeville house stood for "home." See Paul Young, "Media on Display: A Telegraphic History of Early American Cinema," in *New Media, 1740–1915*, ed. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 239–42.

51. Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 37.

52. See Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 200–202, as well as a suggestive analysis by David Levy, "Re-constructed Newsreels, Re-enactments, and the American Narrative Film," in *Cinema, 1900–1906: An Analytic Study*, ed. Roger Holman (Brussels: Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film, 1982), 243–60.

53. See Charles Musser, "Passions and the Passion Play: Theater, Film, and Religion, 1880–1900," *Film History* 5, no. 4 (1993): 419–56. For a discussion of boxing films, see Dan Streible, "A History of the Boxing Film, 1894–1915: Social Control and Social Reform in the Progressive Era," *Film History* 3, no. 3 (1989): 235–57. Clearly, impersonating Jesus raises a set of issues different from those involved in the impersonation of the boxer Jim Jeffries; in fact, the entire question of "actuality" versus "reenactment" is more vexed and complex than it might seem, since many of these early films, particularly those of Edison, depict people practicing or rehearsing activities (such as rescues), thus blurring any easy distinction between work and play, "reality" and "impersonation."

54. I base this conclusion partly on the success of producers like Siegmund Lubin, who openly filmed and sold such impersonations, and partly on catalog descriptions of films from various companies that tended to focus as much on the clarity of the images as their content. Viewers did not relish being tricked, but as long as these reenactments were acknowledged as such, then most people did not seem to mind, especially since in many cases these films were cheaper and showed up before the genuine articles were exhibited.

55. For an important firsthand account of the filming of the Anglo-Boer War, see W. K. L. Dickson, *Biograph in Battle* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1901). On the importance of this war for the British film industry, see Richard Maltby, introduction to *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894–1901*, vol. 5, *1900*, by John Barnes (Exeter, U.K.: University of Exeter Press, 1997), xi–xxxii.

56. Cited in Brands, *The Reckless Decade*, 315.

57. The influence of newspapers on the war is open to debate and certainly prone to overstatement. But many American correspondents did in fact closely follow scenes of battle. See Charles H. Brown, *The Correspondents' War* (New York: Scribner's, 1967); and Joyce Milton, *The Yellow Kids: Foreign Correspondents in the Heyday of Yellow Journalism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).

58. For a discussion of the war's key role in boosting cinema spectatorship during 1898, see Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 224, 261, and *Before the Nickelodeon*, 126–42. Most of these surviving war films are available for down-

loading and viewing at the Library of Congress Web site *The Spanish-American War in Motion Pictures*, which can be accessed via the LOC home page, www.loc.gov. Drawing on the influential study of Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1989), as well as a wide variety of contemporaneous cultural sources, Bill Brown offers a suggestive analysis of the function of cinematic spectatorship during the war in relation to Stephen Crane's writing. See Bill Brown, *The Material Unconscious: American Amusement, Stephen Crane, and the Economies of Play* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 132–42. See also James Castonguay, "The Spanish-American War in US Media Culture" *Hypertext Scholarship in American Studies*, a special electronic issue of *American Quarterly* (1999) at http://chnm.gmu.edu/aq/war/index.html, accessed February 9, 2007; as well as Kristen Whissel, "The Gender of Empire: American Modernity, Masculinity, and Edison's War Actualities," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 141–65, "Placing the Spectator on the Scene of History: The Battle Reenactment at the Turn of the Century, from Buffalo Bill's Wild West to the Early Cinema," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 22, no. 3 (2002): 225–43, and *Picturing American Modernity: Traffic, Technology, and Silent American Cinema* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

59. *New York Clipper*, April 16, 1898, p. 110, and April 23, 1898, p. 23, respectively.

60. See Levy, "Re-constructed Newsreels, Re-enactments, and the American Narrative Film."

61. Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 458 (entry #604).

62. Miriam Hansen makes essentially the same point. See *Babel and Babylon*, 31. The resonant phrase "counterfeit presentments" is cited by Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 127.

63. My emphasis on the political implications of cinema's disembodying tendencies resonates closely with Amy Kaplan's influential reading of the disembodied nature of American foreign policy during the 1890s. See Kaplan, "Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s," *American Literary History* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 659–90, and "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 3–21, as well as *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

64. These films include a Lumière view of the 1897 inauguration, McKinley inspecting an army encampment (taken September 1898), McKinley and his wife leaving an observatory in Massachusetts (taken June 1899), and views of his 1901 inauguration taken by various film companies.

65. For an interesting discussion of this exposition, see Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 126–53.

66. The president's last speech is reprinted in Marshall Everett, *Complete Life of William McKinley and Story of His Assassination* (n.p., 1901), 115–20. Quoted phrase is on 117.

67. For Edison's role in the 1893 Columbian Exposition, see Neil Baldwin, *Edison: Inventing the Century* (New York: Hyperion, 1995), 233–38. When I refer to "Edison" in subsequent pages, I mean the corporation as well as the person. For an important analysis of this tendency to conflate person and corporation at the turn of the twentieth century, see Walter Benn Michaels, "Corporate Fiction," in *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 181–213.

68. Although there is no surviving film depicting activities within "Darkest Africa," the pavilion can clearly be seen in *A Trip around the Pan-American Exposition,* which was shot from the front of a boat traveling through the exposition's canals. See Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 175–76. These Pan-American Exposition films can be downloaded for viewing from the Library of Congress Web site *Last Days of a President: McKinley and the World's Fair.*

69. Rydell points out that the organizers of the exposition actually considered putting recently captured Filipino resistance leader Emilio Aguinaldo on display at the fair, but dismissed the idea as "not practical." See *All the World's a Fair,* 144. For a devastating analysis of how Filipino insurgents were commonly treated as recalcitrant Indians, see Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 106–11.

70. I should note that this film opens and closes by clearly showing the arches and columns surrounding the arena, giving the battle perhaps more of a surreal than a realistic effect.

71. See Leech, *In the Days of McKinley,* 594.

72. In his highly entertaining but notoriously unreliable memoirs, early filmmaker Albert E. Smith dubiously claims that he directly captured close-ups of McKinley moments after he was shot, but that this historic film documenting the wounded president's look of agony "deteriorated in the course of time," and that only a few frames of the negative survived. See *Two Reels and a Crank* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1952), 132–33.

73. See Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 187, and 518n85. Apparently the Pathé film no longer survives.

74. See Elias Savada, ed., *American Film Institute Catalog: Film Beginnings, 1893–1910,* vol. A, "Keyword Index" (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 378.

75. See Everett, *Complete Life of William McKinley,* 36.

76. Cited in Ben Procter, *William Randolph Hearst: The Early Years, 1863–1910* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 168. Proctor points out that Hearst was particularly vulnerable to patriotic attack because Czolgosz was arrested carrying a copy of the *New York Journal* highly critical of McKinley. For a discussion of Czolgosz's trial and execution, see Eric Rauchway, *Murder-*

ing McKinley: The Making of Theodore Roosevelt's America (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003).

77. Various exhibited sequences of separate 1901 McKinley films organized by Lyman Howe and other exhibitors ended with the funeral ceremonies in Canton, Ohio. See Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 185; and Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, 112–13.

78. See, for example, Everett, *Complete Life of William McKinley;* and Alexander McClure and Charles Morris, *The Authentic Life of William McKinley, Our Third Martyr President* (n.p., 1901). The publishing history of these rapidly produced memorials deserves further attention. As Charles Musser reminded me, newspapers also published special supplements designed as keepsakes to memorialize major news events such as McKinley's assassination.

79. See Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 186. A similar illustration titled *Our Martyr President* serves as the frontispiece for Everett, *Complete Life of William McKinley.*

80. Musser cites a newspaper account reporting that one kinetoscope owner offered two thousand dollars for permission to film Czolgosz's execution. See *Before the Nickelodeon*, 187.

81. Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, 201n14.

82. Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 190.

83. Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 47.

84. For a discussion of Edison's role in developing electrocution, see Robert Conot, *A Streak of Luck* (New York: Seaview Books, 1979), 256–57. Conot points out that Edison saw electrocution as a way of exposing the dangers of rival Westinghouse's reliance on high-voltage alternating current, as opposed to his own use of direct current. Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992), offers a striking analysis of the intimate relation between reproduction and death within American naturalism's machine-body complex, as he calls it, but curiously does not explicitly discuss the technology of film at the turn of the twentieth century. For earlier and later cinematic depictions of electrocutions, see Biograph's *A Career of Crime* (1900) and Edison's own graphic *Electrocuting an Elephant* (1903), briefly discussed in Jay Leyda and Charles Musser, *Before Hollywood* (New York: American Federation of the Arts, 1986), 109. This latter film is so creepy precisely because we know that the animal is incapable of acting its death.

85. Cited in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 188. Perhaps because the catalog copy might have been written before the film was completed, this description is a bit inaccurate, in that the Warden actually turns to another official, who then faces the camera to announce Czolgosz's death.

86. The one advertisement for the film I have found emphasizes the fact that the views of the prison were taken on the day of the actual execution in order to insist on the immediacy and authenticity of the act of filming itself, which is dubbed a "Realistic Imitation." See the *New York Clipper*, November 16, 1901, p. 832.

87. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979).

2. LOOKING OUT: VISUALIZING SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Epigraph: James Mark Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development: A Study of Social Psychology,* 2nd ed. (1899; reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1973), 8.

1. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), 13–14.

2. Although a distinction here could be made between the camera itself and the cameraman, for the purposes of my argument such a distinction is moot, since I am examining people's reactions to the process of being filmed. For an interesting discussion that maintains this distinction, see Livio Belloi, "Lumière and His View: The Cameraman's Eye in Early Cinema," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 15, no. 4 (1995): 461–74. Belloi emphasizes the formal decisions Lumière cameramen made about camera placement and frame composition to catch their subjects in certain positions.

3. For one excellent typology, see Jean Chateauvert, "The Fiery Gaze: A Modest Proposal for Better Seeing," in *American Silent Film,* ed. Gregg Bachman and Thomas J. Slater (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 70–93. For an interesting discussion of the subversive potential of "the return gaze" in early ethnographic films, see Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, and Turn-of-the Century Visual Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 196–203. On self-consciousness in early cinema specifically in relation to contemporaneous American art, see Nancy Mowll Mathews, with Charles Musser, *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film, 1880–1910* (Manchester, Vt.: Hudson Hill Press in association with the Williams College Museum of Art, 2005), 124–27.

4. Frank Wood, "Spectator's Comments," *New York Dramatic Mirror,* May 14, 1910. Reprinted in *American Film Criticism,* ed. Stanley Kaufmann (New York: Liverlight, 1972), 40.

5. Ibid.

6. Nor will I be discussing another interesting group of early films, which includes *The Story the Biograph Told* (1904), that dramatize the voyeuristic pleasure of seeing without being seen by capturing through peepholes, magnifying glasses, and movie cameras people who are unaware that they are being watched.

7. For the role of the actor in early cinema, see Charles Musser, "The Changing Status of the Actor," in *Before Hollywood,* ed. Jay Leyda and Charles Musser (New York: American Federation of the Arts, 1986), 57–62. For an interesting discussion of the staged versus unstaged scene in early cinema, see James Lastra, "From the Captured Moment to the Cinematic Image: A Transformation in Pictorial Order," in *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography,* ed. Dudley Andrew (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 266–69.

8. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 15.

9. Ibid., 89, italics in original.

10. For this account of Sartre, I am indebted to Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 92–99.

11. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 361. For another critique of Sartre along these lines, see J. H. van den Berg, "The Human Body and the Significance of Human Movement," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 13 (1952): 159–83.

12. On Alexander Black, see Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 185–87; and Kaveh Askari, "From 'The Horse in Motion' to 'Man in Motion': Alexander Black's Detective Lectures," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2005): 59–76.

13. There is perhaps a fourth national context, English, especially the work of Darwin and Spencer. See, for instance, Robert J. Richards, *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 71–330; Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 203–50; and J. D. Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: The Evolution of a Sociologist* (New York: Basic Books, 1971). Despite Spencer's voluminous writings on a myriad of subjects, there is little indication that he was concerned with social mimesis.

14. Hippolyte Bernheim, *Suggestive Therapeutics: A Treatise on the Nature and Uses of Hypnotism*, trans. Christian A. Herter (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1889), 125–58. Bernheim is discussed by Lee Grieveson, "Mimesis at the Movies: Cinema Studies and the Conduct of Conduct," in *Inventing Film Studies*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming). I am indebted to Grieveson's comprehensive survey of the era's theories of mimesis. He is, however, primarily interested in seeing how these ideas bear on movie spectatorship, rather than in seeing their relation to representations of filmed subjects, which is my concern.

15. Gabriel Tarde, *Laws of Imitation*, trans. Elsie Clews Parsons (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962), 77, xiv. See also a third comment by Tarde with interesting political implications: "Intimidation plays an immense part in society under the name of Respect," 86.

16. Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: Viking, 1960), 24.

17. Wilhelm Wundt, *Principles of Physiological Psychology*, trans. Edward Bradford Titchener (New York: Macmillan, 1904), *Lectures on Human and Animal Psychology* (New York: Macmillan, 1894), and *An Introduction to Psychology* (1912; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1973). On Wundt's influence, see Kurt Danzinger, "Wundt's Theory of Behaviour and Volition," in *Wilhelm Wundt and the Making of a Scientific Psychology*, ed. R. W. Wieber (New York: Plenum Press, 1980), 89–116, and "On the Threshold of a New Psychology: Sit-

uating Wundt and James," in *Wundt Studies,* ed. Wolfgang G. Bringmann and Ryan D. Tweney (Toronto: C. J. Hogrefe, 1980), 363–79. George Herbert Mead's criticism of Wundt's parallelism is scattered through his work. See, for instance, George Herbert Mead, "1914 Class Lectures in Social Psychology," in *The Individual and Social Self,* ed. David L. Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 34–35, 37, 57, 59–60. In my next chapter, I take up Mead's adaptation of Wundt in relation to theories of the communicative gesture.

18. Josiah Royce, "The Imitative Functions, and Their Place in Human Nature," *Century* (May 1894): 142. I should point out that the very next issue of *Century* carried the well-known essay by W. K. L. Dickson and his sister Antonia describing Edison's newest inventions, the kinetograph and kinetoscope.

19. Quoted in Ruth Leys, "Mead's Voices: Imitation as Foundation, or, the Struggle against Mimesis," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Winter 1993): 277–307. Ley's article is an excellent discussion of the impact of Tarde on American thinkers such as Baldwin and Mead.

20. Charles H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribner's, 1902), 184. For yet another account of intersubjectivity based on pictorial metaphors, see William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1890; reprint, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981): "Properly speaking, a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind" (1:294).

21. James, *The Principles of Psychology,* 12 (table of contents summary to chapter 21), 300, 279.

22. James Mark Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development: A Study of Social Psychology,* 2nd ed. (1899; reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1973).

23. For particulars about this scandal, as well as other details about Baldwin's career, see Richards, *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior,* 451–503. See also Robert H. Wozniak, introduction to *Selected Works of James Mark Baldwin,* ed. Wozniak (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2001), v–xxxi.

24. Quoted in Richards, *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior,* 460.

25. James Mark Baldwin, *Mental Development in the Child and the Race* (New York: Macmillan, 1894), 123.

26. Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development,* 8–9. Italics in original. For an earlier formulation, see James Mark Baldwin, "Imitation: A Chapter in the Natural History of Consciousness," *Mind,* n.s., 3, no. 9 (January 1894): 26–55. For a contemporaneous discussion of Baldwin and Tarde, see Charles A. Ellwood, "The Theory of Imitation in Social Psychology," *American Journal of Sociology* 6, no. 6 (May 1901): 721–41.

27. For Baldwin's critique of Tarde, see *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development,* xi–xiv (preface to the 2nd ed.), 478–79.

28. For a discussion of the importance of the spontaneous in Lumière, see Dai Vaughan, "Let There Be Lumière," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narra-*

tive, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Baker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 63–67.

29. See Mary Tompkins Lewis, *Cézanne* (London: Phaidon Press, 2000), 260–65.

30. For the relation between this era's accounts of hysteria and French culture, including cabaret and early cinema, see Ruth Beth Gordon, *Why the French Love Jerry Lewis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). Gordon persuasively argues for the influence of Tarde's theories of imitation on French visual and performing arts; however, the waiter's hysterics in the Lumière film may have had less to do with what Gordon calls "performance styles" than a broader and deeper sense of self-dislocation. But one early response to the film, with some uncertainty, did stress the performative aspects of the waiter: "The hilarity of the garcon at the results of the game seemed almost bound to produce laughter among the audience." See "The Lantern Record," monthly supplement to the *British Journal of Photography* (March 6, 1896): 17.

31. Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 26.

32. Maguire & Baucus (Continental Commerce Company), "Thomas A. Edison's Latest and Most Remarkable Invention, the Kinetoscope" (n.p., Maguire & Baucus, 1894), 3.

33. "Some of Edison's Latest," *Albany Telegram*, 1894, reprinted in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 86.

34. Maguire & Baucus, "Thomas A. Edison's Latest and Most Remarkable Invention, the Kinetoscope," 3.

35. For an interesting discussion of *Maggie* along these lines, see Howard Horwitz, "*Maggie* and the Sociological Paradigm," *American Literary History* 10, no. 4 (1998): 606–38.

36. Reprinted in Kemp Niver, ed., *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908* (Los Angeles: Locare Research Group, 1968), 29.

37. For a discussion that emphasizes the film's contingency, rather than its staged aspects, see Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 197–98. Other important discussions of the film include Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 161–64; Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 39; and Constance Balides, "Scenarios of Exposure in the Practice of Everyday Life: Women in the Cinema of Attractions," *Screen* 34, no. 1 (1993): 19–37. None of these specifically examine the role of the boy in the white shirt.

38. The fear that urban beggars could be fakes was a pervasive concern during this period. See John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 100–111. Edison's film is a takeoff on a popular vaudeville routine, also filmed by Biograph in 1904, titled *Pity the Blind*.

39. For an interesting discussion of a later film, *Traffic in Souls* (1913), that displays a similar sort of mingling between fact and fiction, see Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 154–55. In his useful account of *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island,* Charles Musser remarks how "the performers are often subservient to a scenic impulse." See Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 250. The film can be viewed at www.loc.gov.

40. Quoted in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures,* 271.

41. I discuss one such extended fire rescue in greater detail in chapter 4. For a suggestive account of role playing and "the anticipated self" in Dreiser's 1900 novel *Sister Carrie,* see Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 157–69.

INTERLUDE

1. For a variety of other visual precursors, see Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

2. Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Altman does briefly discuss a change in Edison subject matter around 1895 from "people *making sounds*" to "people *keeping time to sounds*" (81–82, italics in original)—a shift that allowed for looser kinds of synchronization schemes based "on the presence of sound cues (whether for music or effects) within the image" (92).

3. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); George Berkeley, *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision and Other Philosophical Writings* (London: Dutton, 1922); and Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *A Treatise on Sensations,* trans. Geraldine Carr (Los Angeles: University of Southern California School of Philosophy, 1930).

4. Denis Diderot, "Letter on the Deaf and Dumb," in *Diderot's Early Philosophical Works,* ed. and trans. Margaret Jourdain (New York: Burt Franklin, 1972), 170–71. For a discussion of "colour-music," including this harpsichord, see Jonathan Ree, *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language, and the Senses—a Philosophical History* (London: Metropolitan, 1999), 27–33. Ree points out that the instrument was based on a dubious analogy between a musical scale and a color spectrum.

5. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 41.

6. On "fugitive" sounds, see James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 19–20. For an interesting early science fiction story (1860) envisioning the graphical inscription of sound vibrations as a technology of surveillance, see J. D. Whelpley, "The Atoms of Chladni," in *Future Perfect:*

American Science Fiction of the Nineteenth Century—an Anthology, ed. H. Bruce Franklin (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 175–201.

7. Giusy Pisano, *Une Archéologie du Cinéma Sonore* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2004), 173–74. Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema* also cites Nadar (16–17) in relation to sound/sight analogies that pervade the nineteenth century. *Phonography* is a term used by Isaac Pitman in the 1830s to describe his shorthand transcription system.

8. Reprinted in Gordon Hendricks, *Origins of the American Film* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), appendix B, p. 158. Hendricks preserves Edison's omission of punctuation in these handwritten caveats.

9. Ibid., 158.

10. *Orange Chronicle*, February 1, 1890, p. 5; *New York Sun*, May 28, 1891, pp. 1–2, both cited in Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 70 and 76, respectively. The *New York Sun* article goes so far as to claim that "the idea which has actuated our Edison in his work on the kinetograph is the reproduction of opera" (Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 78).

11. For opera's changing status in the United States, see John Dizikes, *Opera in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), particularly his discussion of the Metropolitan Opera at the turn of the twentieth century (284–92).

12. *New York World*, June 3, 1888, p. 16, cited in Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 62.

13. For an important discussion of a long-standing Western tradition of seeing the face as the key to unlocking mysteries of character, see Tom Gunning, "In Your Face: Physiognomy, Photography, and the Gnostic Mission of Early Film," *Modernism/modernity* 4, no. 1 (1997): 1–29. Gunning helps contextualize the early genre of facial expression films, but in examining pivotal figures such as Darwin and Demenÿ, among others, as I do, he does not connect early cinema's fascination with the face in general and the "open orifice" (23) in particular to questions of sound, aside from a fleeting reference (17) to speaking as capturing the mouth in motion. For the face as cinema's locus of affect, see Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, trans. Edith Bone (New York: Dover, 1970), esp. "The Close-Up" and "The Face of Man," 52–88; and Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 87–101. For an interesting analysis linking mediated faces with death that bears on my own concluding discussion, see Therese Davis, *The Face on the Screen: Death, Recognition, and Spectatorship* (Bristol, U.K.: Intellect Books, 2004).

14. Hendricks, *Origins of the American Film*, 163.

15. *New York Sun*, May 28, 1891, cited in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 76.

16. *Scientific American* 37, no. 25 (December 22, 1877): 384. This article helps to confirm Noël Burch's suggestive but largely unsupported assertion that, "for Edison, the project of moving photographs arose to supply a *defect*

inherent in the phonograph" (italics in original). See Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 28. See also Friedrich A. Kittler, who briefly mentions "cinema as an add-on to the phonograph," noting that "sound film preceded silent film" (*Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999], 171). Kittler goes on to offer a plausible explanation for Edison's failure to achieve sound-image synchronization: "Whereas in the optical realm, processing was a matter of equidistant scanning, which television was to increase to millions of points per second, in the acoustic dimension processing was based on analogies in a continuous stream of time. . . . Which is why Edison's master-slave relationship was turned on its head, and film, with its controllable time, took the lead" (171).

17. Tom Gunning, "Doing for the Eye What the Phonograph Does for the Ear," in *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel and Rick Altman (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2001), 28. See also Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).

18. Diderot, introduction and "Letter on the Deaf and Dumb," in *Diderot's Early Philosophical Works*, ed. and trans. Margaret Jourdain (New York: Burt Franklin, 1972), 24, 165–66. Jourdain translates the French *decomposer*, in the body of Diderot's letter, as "analyze," but while citing the same passage in her introduction, she uses the more accurate "decompose." See Diderot, "Lettre sur les sourds et muets," *Œuvres Completes*, vol. 2 (Paris: Le Club Français de Livre, 1969), 525. In this same letter, Diderot describes how he enjoys plugging up his ears while at the theater to focus on actors' expressive gestures and, conversely, closing his eyes to concentrate on their intonation (173–74).

19. W. K. L. Dickson and Antonia Dickson, *History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope, and Kineto-Phonograph* (New York: Albert Bunn, 1895; reprint, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2000), 8. The Dicksons later claim in this pamphlet that Dickson filmed himself greeting Edison upon his return from the Paris Exposition in 1889 while saying, "I hope you are satisfied with the kinetophonograph," but Musser dates the first surviving motion picture of Dickson from May 1891. See *Edison Motion Pictures*, 73.

20. The quasi-mystical notion of opera that Edison expresses in his first caveat bears some obvious resemblance to Wagner's concept of "Gesamtkunstwerk" ("the total artwork"), but I have not found any evidence that Edison at this point was familiar with Wagner's 1849 essay "The Artwork of the Future." Although it may encompass all the senses, Edison's idea of "continuous Opera" is mainly audiovisual.

21. André Bazin, "The Myth of Total Cinema," in *What Is Cinema*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 21; and Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, 7. In "Doing for the Eye What the Phonograph Does for the Ear," Tom Gunning discusses these two options as if they were rather distinct, but they seem very similar to me, albeit with quite a different evaluative spin.

22. George Parsons Lathrop, "Edison's Kinetograph," *Harper's Weekly* (June 13, 1891): 446. Edison's handwritten notes for their planned coauthored novel, titled "Progress," can be found at the Edison Papers Web site: http://edison.rutgers.edu.

23. Barnet Phillips, "The Record of a Sneeze," *Harper's Weekly* (March 24, 1894): 280, cited in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 88.

24. Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 51–52 and 63–64. The verb *perform* is not hers, but rather was used by the reporter Phillips, who requested that Edison record a sneeze. See also Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 12–13.

25. Henri Bergson, "Laughter," in *Comedy*, ed. Wylie Sypher (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), 79. In describing the multiple attempts to get Ott to sneeze for the camera, the Dicksons allude to a "hitch somewhere in the anatomical machinery." See *History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope, and Kineto-Phonograph*, 40.

26. Phillips, "The Record of a Sneeze," 280, cited in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 88.

27. For Edison's business model, see Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 81–89.

28. David Appelbaum, *Voice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 4, 6, 9, and 8, respectively.

29. Ree, *I See a Voice*, 87.

30. Quoted in ibid., 122.

31. On Condillac's theory of language, see ibid., 133–37; Appelbaum, *Voice*, 79–84 and 91–97; and Herbert Josephs, *Diderot's Dialogue of Language and Gesture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969), 23–29.

32. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd ed., rev. and augmented (London: John Murray, 1882), chapter 19, 556–85. The 1857 Herbert Spencer essay in question is: "On the Origin and Function of Music," in *Essays on Education* (New York: Dutton, 1966), 310–30.

33. Wilhelm Wundt, *The Language of Gestures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), and *Principles of Physiological Psychology*, trans. Edward Bradford Titchener (New York: Macmillan, 1904).

34. Karl Buhler, "The Psychophysics of Expression of Wilhelm Wundt," in *The Language of Gestures*, by Wilhelm Wundt (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 30–54.

35. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872). Darwin frequently uses photographs of facial close-ups to illustrate his points. In his conclusion, Darwin deems blushing the "most strictly human" expression of emotion (364).

36. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Henry Holt, 1890; reprint, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 256–59; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe

(Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), sec. 342, pp. 109–10. Wittgenstein seems most dubious about the kind of cosmic speculations concerning God and the universe that Ballard claims to have wordlessly thought.

37. Diderot, "Letter on the Deaf and Dumb," 163–64.

38. On Bell's "Visible Speech," see Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 37–38; and Ree, *I See a Voice*, 258–64. See also Appelbaum, *Voice*, 99–110. For a history of deaf education more generally, see Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears* (New York: Random House, 1984).

39. Quoted in Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 180. Braun also points out (402n20) how Marey from the 1860s was interested in optical acoustics, the graphical recording of sound. See also Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, trans. and ed. Richard Crangle (Exeter, U.K.: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 354–56; and Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 136–38 and 180–82.

40. See Deac Rossell, *Living Pictures: The Origins of the Movies* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1998), 41–45.

41. Quoted in Laurent Mannoni, *Georges Demenÿ: Pionnier du Cinéma* (Douai, France: Editions Pagine, 1997), 44. Quote translated by Martin Karcher. See also Pisano, *Une Archéologie du Cinéma Sonore*, 206–9.

42. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 15. For a different view that stresses Saussure's debt to laboratory experiments in phonetics conducted by Marey, Demenÿ, and others, see Robert Brain, "Standards and Semiotics," in *Inscribing Science*, ed. Timothy Lenoir (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 249–84.

43. Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), 161.

44. Dickson and Dickson, *History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope, and Kineto-Phonograph*, 19. Technically, *kinetograph* refers to the machine taking the pictures and *kinetoscope* to the peephole playback device, but these terms were often interchanged.

45. For the Edison quotation, see Dickson and Dickson, *History*, 3 (Edison's handwritten endorsement of their book). For the "Opera at Home" remarks, see *Orange Chronicle*, March 16, 1895, p. 7, cited in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 179.

46. See Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 65. Musser subsequently has come to doubt that the film was made for projection; see Charles Musser, "*The May Irwin Kiss:* Performance and the Beginnings of Cinema," in *Visual Delights Two: Exhibition and Reception*, ed. Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple (Eastleigh, U.K.: John Libbey, 2005), 96–115, and "A Cornucopia of Images: Comparison and Judgment across Theater, Film, and the Visual Arts during the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Moving Pic-*

tures: American Art and Early Film, 1880–1910, ed. Nancy Mowll Mathews, with Charles Musser (Manchester, Vt.: Hudson Hill Press in association with the Williams College Museum of Art, 2005), 33.

47. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991). Hansen briefly discusses *The May Irwin Kiss* in relation to voyeurism (35).

48. All quotations from McGuirk, "The Anatomy of a Kiss," *New York World*, April 26, 1896, p. 21. Text reprinted in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 198–200. For an invaluable reproduction of the actual newspaper page layout, see Kenneth Macgowan, *Behind the Screen* (New York: Dell, 1965), 95. McGuirk also jokes that the film has legal potential, allowing judges and juries in the future to set a dollar value on kisses.

49. Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 193–218, and "Passions and the Passion Play: Theater, Film, and Religion, 1880–1900," *Film History* 5, no. 4 (1993): 419–56.

50. *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1896, p. 8, cited in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 82.

51. *Boston Herald*, May 19, 1896, p. 9, cited in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 80. On this question of scale, a German reviewer remarked in 1912: "In the cinema as in the theatre, the natural size of the human body should be the unchanging unit of measurement." Cited in Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8. Brewster and Jacobs explain that, for their own film analysis, "shot-scale terms are relative to a human body, and are always linked explicitly or implicitly to the relation to the frame of a character" (xi).

52. *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1896, p. 6, cited in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 83.

53. Herbert S. Stone, notice in *The Chap Book* (15 June 1896), cited in Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights* (1926; reprint, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 259. Magnification (or distortion) seems to have been enhanced by repetition, as if the grotesque heads grew larger and larger with each subsequent viewing.

54. Unfortunately I have not been able to find a full script of McNally's musical comedy. The New York Public Library has a prompt-book for act 2 of *The Widow Jones*, but the kiss occurs near the end of act 3.

55. McGuirk, *New York World*, 21. McGuirk seems to be quoting a line from the play, and not a remark made during filming, since she refers to the character of the Widow and not the actress May Irwin, yet it seems unlikely that this long a sentence is uttered by either Irwin or Rice during the dialogue preceding the kiss, as a deaf lip-reader confirmed to me while I was trying to decode their conversation. Lipreading in this instance was not successful because of the couple's pressed faces and Rice's big moustache. For two recent discussions of the film, see Jane Gaines, *Fire and Desire: Mixed Race Movies in the Silent Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 88; and Linda Williams, "Of Kisses

and Ellipses: The Long Adolescence of American Movies," *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Winter 2006): 288–340. Both accounts remark on the awkward posturing of the couple, but not specifically in terms of their acts of speaking.

56. William Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, act 5, scene 4, 98, *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). Benedict here echoes an earlier comment by Beatrice: "Speak cousin, or (if you cannot) stop his mouth with a kiss, and let not him speak neither" (2.1.310–11).

57. Christopher Nyrop, *The Kiss and Its History*, trans. William Harvey (London: Sands, 1901), 177. For a striking discussion of the kiss as an attempt to articulate the body, at once mucous slime and a seal of temporal transcendence, see Daniel Cottom, *Cannibals and Philosophers: Bodies of Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 180–208.

58. References to "the vocal gesture" are scattered through Mead's writing, but see, in particular, George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, ed. Charles Morris, pt. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), "Wundt and the Concept of the Gesture," 42–51, "Imitation and the Origin of Language," 51–61, and "The Vocal Gesture and the Significant Symbol," 61–68.

59. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, 62. The privileging of speech over writing as a medium of presence goes back to Plato and, in its more recent incarnations (by thinkers like Walter J. Ong), has been vigorously challenged by many, including Jonathan Sterne (*The Audible Past*, 14–16). One need not idealize hearing over seeing to appreciate that these two senses operate quite differently, and perhaps another reason that Mead emphasizes ear over eye is that hearing is less volitional than sight, which can be easily turned off (eyes can be closed) at will. But in assuming a perfectly transparent circuit of communication between speaking and hearing, Mead ignores the fact that, when you hear yourself, these vibrations are mediated, having traveled through your body (your jaw and cranium) as well as through the air, which is why your recorded voice often sounds strange to you. Early on, phonograph listeners noted this alienation effect, as an 1890 *New York Journal* clipping (dated November 9 in the Edison microfilm and digital edition) suggests: "The effect upon the artist who talks into the machine is peculiar. The oddity lies in the fact of hearing their own voices, a sensation which they have never before enjoyed. . . . He or she who tries it will be surprised to learn what wrong impressions they have had all their lives in regard to the sound of their own voices." My thanks to Lisa Gitelman for bringing this clipping to my attention.

60. Mead's "vocal gesture" is a more internalized version of Charles Horton Cooley's notion of a "looking-glass self." See "The Social Self—The Meaning of 'I,'" in *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribner's, 1902), 168–210.

61. See Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 73.

62. For some of his many articles elaborating his concept of a "cinema of attractions," see Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3–4 (Fall 1986): 63–70, "'Primitive' Cinema: A Frame-Up? Or the Trick's on Us, *Cinema Journal* 28,

no. 2 (Winter 1989): 3–12, "Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions," *Velvet Light Trap* 32 (1993): 3–12. For a criticism of the narration/attractions binary similar to my own, see Brewster and Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema*, 18–19. They argue that theatrical conventions developed during the nineteenth century enabled early cinema viewers to conceive of narrative as "a series of pictorially representable moments" (19).

63. Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, 95.

64. "The Amateur Photographic Pest," *Punch* (October 4, 1890): 167. The Williamson catalog description of the film makes the "fiend" aspect explicit: " 'I won't! I won't! I'll eat the camera first.' Gentleman reading, finds a camera fiend with his head under a cloth, focussing him up. He orders him off, approaching nearer and nearer, gesticulating and ordering the photographer off, until his head fills the picture and finally his mouth only occupies the screen. He opens it, and first the camera, then the operator disappears inside. He retires munching him up and expressing great satisfaction. 65 feet." Quoted in Martin Sopocy, *James Williamson: Studies and Documents of a Pioneer of the Film Narrative* (London: Associated University Presses, 1998), 37.

65. For an interesting discussion challenging the myth that early film actors often uttered nonsense because they knew they would never be heard by audiences, see Isabelle Raynauld, "Dialogues in Early Silent Screenplays: What Actors Really Said," in *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel and Rick Altman (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2001), 69–78.

66. Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, 220–21. It is instructive to compare this film to *Photographing a Female Crook*, which I briefly discuss in my introduction, since in both films the camera and the face grow closer together. In *Female Crook*, from the start a clear distinction is made between the movie lens that zooms in on the subject and the fixed photography apparatus that is clearly visible at the beginning of the shot near the right of the frame. In this film, however, any such distinction emerges only after the swallowing takes place, in the "third person" second shot (and a problematic distinction at that, as I suggest).

67. See Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture;* Altman, *Silent Film Sound;* and Roberta Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Pearson discusses gesture primarily in terms of prevailing theatrical modes of performance.

68. Parker Tyler, *The Hollywood Hallucination* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1944), 28. A few sentences later, analyzing how sound contributed to the "*totalized* effect" of early cinema, Tyler remarks, "We must not forget that normal people suddenly fixed on the moving image *the concentration of the deaf*" (italics in original).

3. CHASING FILM NARRATIVE

1. Thomas Elsaesser, introduction to *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Elsaesser, with Adam Baker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 12. I am

indebted to Elsaesser's excellent overview of early cinema and narration. For another succinct summary of various accounts explaining the emergence of narrative during the transitional period 1902–7, those emphasizing economic, social, and institutional forces versus those emphasizing modes of cinematic representation, see Richard Abel, *The Cine Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 102–5.

2. For the claim of undifferentiated information, see Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 17. For a counterclaim emphasizing closure, see Marshall Deutelbaum, "Structural Patterning in the Lumière Films," in *Film before Griffith*, ed. John Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 299–310. For an important discussion of cinematic deep staging that focuses on a slightly later period, see Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

3. For a discussion of single-shot narration and its limitations, see Richard Decordova, "From Lumière to Pathé: The Break-Up of Perspectival Space," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Baker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 76–85; and André Gaudreault, "Film, Narrative, Narration: The Cinema of the Lumière Brothers," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Baker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 68–75. More recently Gaudreault has shown that, in many early single-shot Edison and Lumière actualities, the camera was stopped and restarted during filming, although he is careful to avoid describing these interventions by the cameraman as prototypes of editing procedure. André Gaudreault, with Jean-Marc Lamotte, "Fragmentation and Segmentation in the Lumière 'Animated Views,'" *Moving Image* 3, no. 1 (2003): 110–31.

4. See in particular, Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde," and "Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity: A Theory of Genres in Early Films," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Baker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 56–62 and 86–94. Drawing on Russian Formalist theories of genre, Gunning in the latter essay ambitiously undertakes to trace the uneven development of early cinema narration past the single shot through three subsequent overlapping stages or genres, the "non-continuous" (roughly stage two), the "continuous" (stage three), and "discontinuous" (stage four), with "discontinuity" signaling the sort of analytic editing or plotting by formal cut and shot arrangement that we take for granted today. Yet as Gunning's "non" prefixing his second stage indicates, categorizing early cinema historical and formal "genres" by way of shot articulation must presuppose continuity as a baseline of comparison, so that despite his best efforts to avoid teleology his scheme still looks backward from prevailing norms.

5. For a representative collection of such essays, see Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Fully two-thirds of these essays, heavily indebted to Walter Benjamin, dwell on cinema's relation to other late-

nineteenth-century visual experiences and cultural practices, such as mail-order catalogs, posters, wax museums, and department stores. See David Bordwell for an interesting critique of this history of perception approach, what he calls a "vision-in-modernity" model that underlies these various attempts to link early cinema to modernity (*On the History of Film Style* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997], 141–45).

6. Burch, *Life to Those Shadows,* 143–47.

7. Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), and "The Travel Genre in 1903–4: Moving towards Fictional Narrative," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative,* ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Baker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 123–32.

8. See Musser, *Emergence of Cinema,* 258–61, and *Before the Nickelodeon,* 126–37; as well as Amy Kaplan, "The Birth of an Empire," *PMLA* 114, no. 5 (October 1999): 1070.

9. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 46.

10. Alfred Hitchcock deemed the chase "the final expression of the motion picture medium." Quoted in Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 42, 276.

11. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions," 60. See also Burch, *Life to Those Shadows,* 147–51.

12. Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 66.

13. Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 260.

14. Cited in George C. Pratt, *Spellbound in Darkness,* rev. ed. (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 40–41.

15. Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 370–90. See also, of course, Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 217–51.

16. For a philosophically exacting exploration of repetition that effectively dissolves the commonplace repetition/difference binary by viewing repetition as "difference without a concept" (23), see Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). Although indebted to Deleuze, my discussion preserves the binary opposition, insofar as I am interested in the concept of plot.

17. See October 4, 1904, letter to customers (exhibitors) reprinted in Kemp Niver, *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908* (Los Angeles: Locare Research Group, 1968), 130.

18. Running time of these early films would clearly vary depending on projection speed. See Kevin Brownlow, "Silent Films—What Was the Right Speed?" in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative,* ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Baker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 282–90.

19. Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (London: Bodley Head, 1986), 117.

20. Anne Friedberg, " 'A Properly Adjusted Window': Vision and Sanity in D. W. Griffith's 1908–1909 Biograph Films," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Baker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 332. I should point out that, since the back window of the madman's cell and the door used by his keepers share the same perspectival plane (so that when he falls out the window they should reasonably be expected to fall out the door when they leave), the film rests on a physical impossibility, a defiance of mimesis or at least a wholesale neglect of it.

21. Musser briefly notes this exceptional matching cut in *The Emergence of Cinema*, 5.

22. This externalization, I should stress, is a far cry from the sort of externalizations or projections typical of German Expressionist films, where the decor serves to make manifest the characters' psychic turmoil.

23. Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 17. See also Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). As I suggest in my introduction, the complex connections between modernity, machines, the body, and early cinema are only beginning to be traced in some detail, especially in relation to the formal representations of the body in these films themselves.

24. Theodore Leinwand, *Theater, Finance, and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 14.

25. Noël Burch, "Porter, or Ambivalence," *Screen* 19 (Winter 1978–79): 91–105. As early as 1978, during an interesting exchange between Burch and Gunning held at the famous Brighton conference, the possibility raised by Gunning that a film, as opposed to a filmmaker, could demonstrate "resistance" to narrative continuity is prematurely foreclosed by Burch, who assumes that intentionality and agency must reside in individuals. See Roger Holman, ed., *Cinema, 1900–1906: An Analytic Study by the National Film Archive (London) and the International Federation of Film Archives*, vol. 1, *Brighton Symposium* (Brussels: Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film, 1982), 47–48.

26. Elsaesser and Baker, *Early Cinema*, 26. Elsaesser goes on to say that the severing of spatial coherence in early cinema, its move toward a more abstract representational narrative logic, is "reactive," the result of "contending forces" (26), but locates these forces strictly in institutional and cultural contexts outside the films themselves.

27. See Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 253. In typically hyperbolic fashion, a Biograph catalog describes the British import as "one of the most sensational pictures ever cinematographed" (Niver, *Biograph Bulletins*, 96).

28. Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 55–57 and 353–54. Musser borrows the phrase from Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 72–89. Between 1897 and 1900, Edison alone produced half a dozen films depicting burglars in the act of committing a crime. See Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography*

(Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1997), entries #346, 579, 601, 623, 640, and 883. It is interesting to note that, while the Biograph catalog description of *Daring Daylight Burglary* assumes that the policemen is dead (*Biograph Bulletins,* 96) and waiting to be transported to the mortuary, Edison's September 1903 catalog interprets the prone body as "almost dead" and waiting to be driven to a hospital (reprinted in Pratt, *Spellbound in Darkness,* 42). The status of the body in the film was ambiguous in 1903 and remains so today.

29. My subsequent comparisons are limited to the three American versions, whose satire depends on the difference between a French nobleman and American women, a contrast in nationality and social class that the fourth remake, by Pathé, seems to erase or obscure by closely patterning its opening after *Personal.* The latter begins in progress, relying on extradiegetic exposition, presumably catalog description, to explain the motivation for the chase.

30. For the compulsion to repeat, see Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Liveright, 1961). Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* turns Freud on his head by insisting, "We do not repeat because we repress, we repress because we repeat" (105), going on to reconfigure Freud's positing of a primordial death-drive along the lines of Nietzsche's concept of eternal return. For an excellent discussion of Deleuzian repetition in relation to Freud, Nietzsche, and Darwin, among others, see Keith Ansell Pearson, *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 1999). In his conclusion to *Life to Those Shadows,* Noël Burch briefly suggests how the "infantile" (269) fantasies of early cinema might be fruitfully linked to psychoanalytic theory. In emphasizing recursion, I am more interested in the chase film's self-conscious designs than its unconscious drives. At that conscious level, clearly there's a key difference between the lunatic's desire, which can be defined only negatively as a desire to escape all order, and the pursuing women's desire to catch a husband.

31. Burch, "Passion, poursuite: La Linéarisation," *Communications* no. 38 (1983): 30–50; Gunning, "Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity," 91; André Gaudreault, "Temporality and Narrativity in Early Cinema," in *Film before Griffith,* ed. John Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 324–25.

32. For a discussion of how cinema fragments the body, see Stephen Heath, "Body, Voice," in *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 184–86. Heath focuses on composition (close-ups) more than editing. For an interesting analysis of the vulnerability of the body in relation to urban experience at the turn of the twentieth century, see Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). One of the most astonishing crime-chase films of this period, the British *Desperate Poaching Affray* (1903), by Walter Haggar, continually cuts away from bodies in action while still in the frame to produce a dynamic line of narration resembling contemporary Hollywood practice. Yet it is important to remember that this striking Haggar film is anomalous; there is nothing natural, inevitable, or even commonsensical about its anticipation of classic Hollywood action narrative.

33. See Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey*

(1830–1904) (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992); and Mary Ann Doane, "Temporality, Storage, Legibility: Freud, Marey, and the Cinema," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Winter 1996): 313–43.

34. "'Personal': The Great Comedy-Hit Chase Film," *Bulletin* (15 August 1904), reprinted in *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908*, by Kemp Niver (Los Angeles: Locare Research Group, 1968), 121. Although it might seem reasonable to assume that *Personal* originally began like the Edison version with a (now missing) shot of the newspaper advertisement (subsequently removed before being deposited for copyright purposes in the Library of Congress), a careful examination of the existing paper print in the LOC (with no signs of splices and conforming in footage length to contemporaneous catalog descriptions of the film), as well as a close reading of court testimony, indicates that the Biograph film opened with the Frenchmen standing in front of Grant's Tomb—the second shot in Edison's remake.

35. Although the Biograph description was published a week before the Edison remake was publicly released, it is likely that Biograph filmmakers had either directly viewed an advance copy of *How a French Nobleman* or at least knew about it secondhand, given the rather close contact between the two film companies during this period.

36. For two thorough discussions of this court case, see David Levy, "Edison Sales Policy and the Continuous Action Film, 1904–06," in *Film before Griffith*, ed. John Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 207–22; and André Gaudreault, "The Infringement of Copyright Laws and Its Effects," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Baker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 114–22. As their discussions suggest, nomenclature is something of a problem in trying to examine how both plaintiff and defendants understood filmic narration, for what we would call a "shot" is variously referred to as a "scene" or "photograph" or "pantomime" (among other terms borrowed from precursor media) in the court proceedings.

37. "Defendant's Rejoinder to Complainant's Brief in Reply," *American Mutoscope & Biograph Company vs. Edison Manufacturing Company*, U.S. Circuit Court, District of New Jersey, December 24, 1904, 2. This and subsequent legal documents courtesy records of Edison National Historical Site (ENHS).

38. "Defendant's Brief on Demurrer to Bill," April 18, 1905, 6, 5.

39. Letter from Melville Church to Delos Holden (lawyers representing Edison), November 28, 1904, ENHS.

40. Edison catalog description of *How a French Nobleman . . .* , September 1904.

41. "Rebuttal Affidavit of Frank J. Marion," December 17, 1904, 27. Despite Marion's claim, he was apparently unable to provide the court with the "original memorandum" containing the personal advertisement that formed the basis of the chase story.

42. "Complainant's Reply in Brief," December 22, 1904, 15.

43. Judge Lanning, Denial of Application for a Preliminary Injunction, May 6, 1905, 9–10.

44. At one point Edison's lawyers did argue that their version of the chase contained "added new scenes," including the opening shot, presumably. See "Defendant's Brief on Demurrer to Bill," April 18, 1905, 14. See also the key document, "Defendant's Affidavit in Opposition to Complainant's Motion for Preliminary Injunction," December 3, 1904," 9, in which Edwin S. Porter remarks that he added a new opening scene to enable "the principal character to be seen at close range." But he bases his claim for originality and "greater artistic merit" (8) not on narrative structure but on his interpretation or "impression" of the Frenchman's "costume, poses, postures, action," as if the filmmaker were a stage director. It is also interesting to note that contra Biograph's implied claim for originating the idea of the chase in *Personal,* Porter identifies a preexisting generic category of such films that he had seen, what he calls "chase pictures," including influential earlier British productions such as *Daring Daylight Burglary* and a film in which "poachers are pursued" (presumably *Daring Poaching Affray).*

45. For an interesting comparison of theater and early cinema copyright practices, see Jeanne Thomas Allen, "Copyright and Early Theater, Vaudeville, and Film Competition," in *Film before Griffith,* ed. John Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 176–87. For copyright law in relation to cultural conflict more generally, see Bernard Edelman, *Ownership of the Image* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); and Jane M. Gaines, *Contested Culture: The Image, the Voice, and the Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). If cinema is understood in copyright law to be linked to photography by way of analogy, the legal status of photography itself is based on prior forms, as Gaines points out: "The American theorization of original artistry in the photograph, then, is the product of the convergence of at least three analogies: the written composition, the painted canvas, and the printed lithograph" (54). While Edelman distinguishes between still photography and cinema in terms of production (one an individual craft, the other collective business), neither he nor Gaines examines differences between still and moving images in terms of the question of narration as it bears on copyright law. The year 1903 turned out to be a remarkably rich one for important American copyright decisions involving visual and theatrical performance, including not only *Lubin v. Edison* and the landmark case *Bleistein v. Donaldson Lithographic Co.* (about the reproduction of circus posters) but also a case involving mimicry of nonnarrative songs as well as one concerning a vaudeville act that was deemed noninfringing because it triggered identical emotional responses but in differently gendered audiences. See Allen, "Copyright and Early Theater, Vaudeville, and Film Competition," 184.

46. Following Bergson, Gilles Deleuze calls this effect "the cinematographic movement-image" whose "essence . . . lies in extracting from vehicles or moving bodies the movement which is their common substance, or extracting from movements the mobility which is their essence." Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 23. Henri Bergson remains the

crucial link between Deleuze's early work on repetition and his later work on cinema.

4. WINDOWS 1900; OR, *LIFE OF AN AMERICAN FIREMAN*

1. David Thorburn, Edward Barrett, and Henry Jenkins, series forward to *New Media, 1740–1915*, ed. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), vii.

2. Although periodization schemes differ, 1917 is the most common date given for the end of early cinema. For a standard account of chronology and an extensive analysis of classical cinema's formal and institutional features, see David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristen Thompson, *The Classic Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). For an excellent discussion of how early cinema and classic Hollywood cinema overlap, one that persuasively argues that the latter is constituted by ongoing institutional practices which must be continually maintained and stabilized, rather than by any intrinsic set of formal properties, see Paul Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 1–47.

3. Quoted in Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 209. At the risk of valorizing the solitary artist or author, I emphasize the active agency of Edwin S. Porter in the making of the film for two reasons. First, as my subsequent formal analysis suggests, the film is extremely deliberately crafted in terms of its shot composition and succession of images. Second, I think attributing agency to this film, rather than to Porter, is an even more problematic proposition that risks giving the emerging medium a self-evident ontology it may not possess. My emphasis on Porter may seem inconsistent in relation to my previous chapter on chase films, which downplayed the importance of the individual filmmaker, but the nature of the object of inquiry in each case dictates the critical approach, not vice versa.

4. The catalog in its entirety is reprinted in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 215–18 (Document 11). The term *apparatus* is on page 216. I am indebted to Musser's masterful archival research surrounding *Life of an American Fireman*, as well as his comprehensive, detailed analysis of the film itself. The 1903 catalog breaks the film into seven "scenes," suggesting that my use of the word *shot* is somewhat anachronistic. For a discussion of the term *scene* in early cinema, see Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3–5.

5. Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 55–57 and 353–54. For operational aesthetic more generally, see Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 72–89.

6. Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

7. Cited in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 212.

8. For a cogent deconstruction of the fiction/documentary binary in film, see Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), especially chapter 6.

9. Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 213.

10. Musser shrewdly notes how the spectacle of filmmaking in effect supplanted the spectacle of local firefighting, especially since by this point many volunteer companies had themselves been eclipsed by professionals (ibid., 222).

11. Ibid., 225.

12. Musser notes that this is the first time Porter links two contiguous spaces on a vertical plane. See "The Early Cinema of Edwin Porter," *Cinema Journal* 19 (Fall 1979): 30.

13. This painted grid work resembles the backgrounds of the time-motion studies of Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey in the 1890s. For an important of discussion of grids (including windows) in relation to modern art, see Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 9–22, Surprisingly, however, Krauss does not mention time-motion studies. A number of elements in *Life of an American Fireman* work against the film's emphasis on vertical and horizontal linearity, including the curved trolley lines in shot 6, and the firemen's (phallic?) water hoses, which are aimed and directed by the men, but whose powerful hydraulic forces, bending and twisting the hoses wildly every which way, escape total control. In this regard it is also worth noting the many excited dogs that run (literally) throughout the film (see in particular shots 4 and 7). Unlike the powerful horses, these charming creatures are not hitched and, therefore, are not subject to any human control. Adding an air of contingency to events, the animating effects of animal movement in early cinema deserve further analysis.

14. For definitive analysis of the two versions, see Musser, "The Early Cinema of Edwin Porter," 1–38; and André Gaudreault, "Detours in Film Narrative: The Development of Cross-Cutting," *Cinema Journal* 19, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 39–59.

15. Griffith by himself certainly did not invent crosscutting ex nihilo as he claimed, but his name is often automatically associated with the technique in most conventional film histories.

16. Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 206.

17. Burch (ibid., 205–6) claims that, in the last shot of *Life of an American Fireman*, "*all the action is seen over again*" (italics in original) and translates the film's enunciation as follows: "Here is a scene shown from one viewpoint; now here it is seen from another." See also the remarks about "same actions" and multiple perspectives made by Musser (*Before the Nickelodeon*, 226), although in all fairness Musser treats these two shots as overlapping and complementary, repeating key elements that are not identical.

18. Cited in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 216–17. Although the catalog notes six doors opening in the fourth shot, we can see only four, indicating most

likely that the description was based more on its profilmic aspects rather than a viewing of the film itself. Perhaps even more striking than the many doors and windows of the film is shot 3's hole in the floor, through which the firemen slide down the (linear) pole. Like the doors and windows, this hole also serves as a portal allowing the movement of bodies from one space to another; in this case they are drawn vertically downward by the invisible agency of gravity. I am indebted to Charles Musser for this insight.

19. For a wide-ranging analysis of the functions of windows and screens in visual culture from Renaissance paintings to new media, see Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006). Although Friedberg demonstrates that the consistent frame and the single-frame image generate spatial unity, her explicit discussion of early cinema (198–201) does not consider the important role of windows themselves in these early films as shaping how bodies move through space.

20. Two earlier films by Porter are interesting in this respect. *How They Do Things on the Bowery* (1902) has a similar sort of temporal overlap, presenting action from an interior to an exterior, but does not show any passageway or means of egress and ingress between inside and outside. *Appointment by Telephone* (1902), on the other hand, does show a plate glass window between outside and inside that allows a wife on the sidewalk to spy her philandering husband inside a restaurant, but this window takes up the whole frame and thus functions less as a portal than as a transparency. Porter would continue his fascination with windows in *The Great Train Robbery*, as Jonathan Crary has remarked: "Through the open side door of the mail car we see the 'static' landscape outside the train rushing past in a blur. Thus from scene 2 to scene 3 there is a complete exchange of positions and vectors, from an occupation of a stable ground against which the train-objectile moves, to a scene where this literally moving objectile, with which our own position is identified, becomes the 'ground' against which the earth shoots past, unrecognizable in its rush or 'whirling.' . . . Here both the train and the landscape through which it moves become intertwined as reversible, mutually conditioned lines of flight, the recession of one inseparable from the advance of the other. Directions—whether diagonal, horizontal, or vertical—cease to have any privileged significance within the non hierarchical unfoldings of this spatial system." See *Suspensions of Perception* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 345–47.

21. Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 207.

22. See Tom Gunning, "Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity" (91), as well as André Gaudreault, "Temporality and Narrativity in Early Cinema, 1895–1908," in *Film before Griffith*, ed. John Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Gaudreault remarks that, "before releasing the camera to a subsequent space, everything occurring in the first location is necessarily shown" (322). For an interesting analysis of early cinema's "doorway problem"—how multiple figures can exit in one shot and reappear in the next without temporal overlap—see Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (London: Starword, 1992), 58–59. Salt's discussion of dissolves (52–

54) is also pertinent here, since every transition between shots in *Life of an American Fireman* is marked by a dissolve akin to that of magic lantern practice, suggesting again that the film tends to privilege space over time. I should point out that, once the mother and child are carried out of the bedroom in shot 8, two firemen enter to hose down the flames. While this ending to the shot enables enough seconds to transpire to equal the time taken to reunite mother and child in the final shot (and so matching the duration of the temporal overlap), the two firemen also suggest a spatial sort of equivalence at work: directly after two bodies leave the scene, two more enter to replace them.

23. Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), vii. The relevant passage in Kant is as follows: "Time can no more be intuited externally than space can be intuited as something in us. . . . Time is the *a priori* formal condition of all appearances in general. Space, as the pure form of all outer intuitions, is limited as an *a priori* condition merely to outer intuitions. But since, on the contrary, all representations, whether or not they have outer things as their object, nevertheless as determinations of the mind themselves belong to the inner state, while this inner state belongs under the formal condition of inner intuition, and thus of time, so time is an *a priori* condition of all appearance in general, and indeed the immediate condition of the inner intuition (of our souls), and thereby also the mediate condition of outer appearances." *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 157, 180–81. For an interesting discussion of the implications for social theory of Kant's subordination of space to time, see Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* (London: Verso, 1989), 10–42.

24. Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 226; catalog quotes appear on p. 216.

25. Musser in *Before the Nickelodeon* reproduces slides from this lantern show (219).

26. John Fell, *Film and the Narrative Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 112.

27. Cited in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 203. The pointed gendering of space in *Life of an American Fireman* stands in marked contrast to Williamson's *Fire!,* whose rescued victim is a man.

28. The relation between the fireman and his dream vision may in fact be more dynamic and reciprocal than I imply, insofar as the man is roused from sleep the moment the woman in the bubble seems to face her dreamer. The bubble therefore may not be so self-contained. For a discussion of this shot, see Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 188–89. Doane argues that, "since the mother and child are never connected in any other way to this particular fireman," the shot's superimposition more likely depicts an event happening elsewhere, rather than a dream about his own family, but surely these two alternatives (the internal and the simultaneous) are not mutually exclusive.

29. A case could be made for a second role for women in the film, that of

public onlooker, but a close scan of shot 6 reveals only men among the spectators, and while the next shot does show some women in the background looking on as the fire engines pull up to the burning building, they are planted near the houses (presumably their own), which again emphasizes that they exclusively occupy domestic space.

30. Without pushing it, I note a kind of structuralist series of brackets in the film, with the first shot of the family matching the final, ninth shot of their reunion, and the second shot of the alarm—which motivates the chase and signals the hidden interior force of electricity—matching the interior bedroom filled with smoke and fire in the penultimate eighth shot. This allows the third and fourth shots—the firemen leaving their beds and jumping on their engines—to align with shots 6 and 7 (the fire run), leaving shot 5, the thrilling emergence of the apparatus from the firehouse, at the center of the film.

31. Paul Young, "Media on Display: A Telegraphic History of Early American Cinema," in *New Media, 1740–1915,* ed. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 248.

32. Quoted in Joel Tarr, with Thomas Finholt and David Goodman, "The City and the Telegraph: Urban Telecommunications in the Pre-Telephone Era," *Journal of Urban History* 14 (November 1987): 54–55. See also Amy S. Greenberg, *Cause for Alarm: The Volunteer Fire Department in the Nineteenth-Century City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 137. Channing was the son of the famous Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing, and a study is waiting to be written about the relation between telegraphy and transcendentalism in antebellum America. For an intriguing discussion of telegraphy and spiritualism, see Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 21–58.

33. Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 216.

34. Even this seemingly strange second shot borrows from a preexisting visual convention, as evidenced by an 1890 illustration titled "Sending the Alarm," showing a man (seen in full figure) opening a fire alarm box door. Reprinted in Lowell M. Limpus, *History of the New York Fire Department* (New York: Dutton, 1940), 284. Porter's closer-in focus was presumably intended to allow audiences to read the lettering on the door.

35. Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 216. The word *doubtless* in the passage calls attention to the conjectural status of the catalog as a whole. Published the same year as *Life of an American Fireman,* Georg Simmel's great essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" is pertinent here, claiming, "The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the *intensification of nervous stimulation* which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli." In *The Sociology of Georg Simmel,* trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), 409–10, emphasis in original. For an explicitly American cultural context that zeroes in on a single year, the very same year that Porter's film was released, see Tom Lutz, *American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

36. Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 216.

37. Young, "Media on Display," 247.

38. For such a presumption about this particular catalog description serving as running commentary, see George C. Pratt, *Spellbound in Darkness: A History of the Silent Film,* rev. ed. (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 29. See also Burch, *Life to Those Shadows,* 201: "In deciphering the films of this remote period[,] . . . the 'externality of the narrative instance' . . . is better articulated in the catalogues than it is on the screen."

39. Burch, *Life to Those Shadows,* 189.

40. For a discussion of such precursors, see Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 220.

41. See A. Nicholas Vardac, *Stage to Screen* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), for a brief discussion of the film, which remarks in passing that "the action moves out the window with the rescue" (182). More recently, Mary Ann Doane suggests that the window in shot 8 is a "semiotic barrier" that characters cross in order to "transgress the spatial/temporal limits of the frame." *The Emergence of Cinematic Time,* 190.

42. Noël Burch, "Porter, or Ambivalence," *Screen* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1978–79): 104, italics in original.

43. Stan Brakhage, "Metaphors on Vision," in *Film Theory and Criticism,* ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 228. For an important comparison between early and avant-garde cinema that explicitly mentions Brakhage, see Tom Gunning, "An Unseen Energy Swallows Space: The Space in Early Film and Its Relation to American Avant-Garde Film," in *Film before Griffith,* ed. John Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 355–66. Gunning analyzes three features of early cinema space—superimposition, direct address, and camera movement—but does not discuss how bodies move, as I have done. I am less interested in the Brakhage-Porter link per se than in suggesting how early cinema might have tended toward a certain kind of postmodern abstraction before it became modern. For a discussion of the nonchronological relation between modernism and postmodernism, see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). For an interesting discussion of recent digital media that frequently draws on cinema for comparison, especially Vertov's experimental *Man with the Movie Camera* (1929), see Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

CONCLUSION

Epigraph: Quoted in Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

1. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 10–11.

2. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the*

Age of Diderot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), italics in original, 75. See also Herbert Josephs, *Diderot's Dialogue of Language and Gesture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969). Josephs remarks, "Diderot's expansive imagination preferred in painting the brief instants between stillness and activity when attitudes in repose foretold an imminent explosion into gesture" (68–69).

3. Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*, 31.

4. Of course, early cinematic depictions of dying could also be very theatrical, as in *Shooting Captured Insurgents* (1898), which I discuss in my first chapter.

5. Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 185–399. In his study Fried does not discuss motion pictures as subsequently arising out of Manet's concerns. And early films scholars themselves tend not to spend too much time thinking closely about cinema's relation to modern painting, which remains a fruitful subject for further analysis. For one effort, see Nancy Mowll Mathews, with Charles Musser, *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film, 1880–1910* (Manchester, Vt.: Hudson Hill Press in association with the Williams College Museum of Art, 2005).

6. On the painting's sources, see Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 95–99. One of these precursors, titled *Dead Warrior*, by an unknown seventeenth-century master, depicts an isolated fallen soldier next to a skull, which functions as a memento mori. This reminder of death is echoed perhaps in the prone bobby's helmet that lies in the middle of the roadway in *Daring Daylight Burglary*. For a fascinating discussion and animated reconstruction of the original bullfighting painting from which Manet extracted *The Dead Toreador*, see the National Gallery Web site: www.nga.gov/collection/toreador.shtm.

7. Brewster and Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema*, 9–12. For their definition of *tableau* in early cinema, see 33–35.

8. Ibid., 35.

9. Ibid., 54.

10. Ibid., 56. For an interesting study of the film's reception that emphasizes how 1903 audiences would have been able intertextually to make Porter's tableaux coherent and cohesive, and which situates these fourteen discrete shots within the broader cultural context of the story's very familiar narrative, see Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 101–23.

11. Jay Caplan, *Framed Narratives: Diderot's Genealogy of the Beholder* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 24–26.

12. Quoted in Caplan, *Framed Narratives*, 18.

13. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 92, italics in original. Subsequent citations from this edition are cited parenthetically in the paragraph.

14. For a comprehensive account of this philosophical suspicion about sight, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Barthes's insistence on the indexicality of the medium not only ignores nonreferential images,

such as Man Ray's surrealist rayograms, but also digitally manipulated photographs that are now commonplace. Along similar lines, Tom Gunning points to the popular nineteenth-century occult practice of spirit photography as producing uncanny doubles that complicated the assurance that all photographs must necessarily derive from some preexisting reality—that is, some original model (person or object) in front of the camera. See Tom Gunning, "Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, Magic Theatre, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny," in *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video,* ed. Patrice Petro (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1995), 42–71. Even here, though, according to Gunning, most explanations for these images rested on the indexical assumption that the camera was an exquisitely sensitive mechanism for materially capturing traces of a supernatural realm otherwise simply imperceptible to the naked eye. For an interesting discussion of photography and death that draws on Barthes and Susan Sontag, among others, see Sandra M. Gilbert, *Death's Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve* (New York: Norton, 2006), 218–24. Amplifying Barthes's insight that in photographing the dead we certify "that the corpse is alive, as *corpse:* it is the living image of a dead thing" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 79, italics in original), Gilbert remarks: "If photographic portraits of the living constitute reminders that all life is shadowed by death and become therefore tokens of death-in-life, photographic portraits of the dead seem to tell us not that the dead are inanimate objects but rather that they're somehow alive *inside death,* as if the lens of the camera could look through the weight and coldness of the unliving body and with its 'pencil of nature' trace the shape of a self still inhabiting what watchers by the actual corpse know to be motionless and stony" (Gilbert, *Death's Door,* 221, italics in original).

15. Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001), 173. Rosen's comparison between Barthes and Bazin on photographic realism is useful more generally.

16. Garrett Stewart, *Between Film and Screen: Modernism's Photo Synthesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 86, italics in original. Subsequent citations in this paragraph are given parenthetically. Given that Stewart's interests are ontological, not genealogical, he remains relentless preoccupied with the relation between photography and cinema, paying scant attention to other precursor media such as painting and theater, devices such as the zoetrope, and an array of other nineteenth-century visual spectacles such as the diorama and panorama. By contrast a traditional film scholar like Charles Musser begins his account of the emergence of cinema with a chapter on the history of screen practice from the seventeenth-century magic lantern onward, with photography entering only later in this chapter via magic lantern slides. But this genealogy has its own difficulties, since "screen practice" tends to slight Edison's prior kinetoscope peephole technology in favor of larger projected images (both based on photographs). Cinema is so overdetermined, as I discuss at the beginning of the interlude, that it has no single linear prehistory.

For a recent account of cinema's posthistory that draws on Stewart to exam-

ine from a largely psychoanalytic perspective the consequences of new digital and video playback technologies that immobilize the image, see Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006). Her analysis also builds on the scholarship of Raymond Bellour, particularly his "The Pensive Spectator," *Wide Angle* 9, no. 1 (1987): 6–10, and "The Film Stilled," *Camera Obscura* 24 (September 1990): 98–123. Especially pertinent to my concerns is an early insight of Mulvey's: "The cinema combines, perhaps more perfectly than any other medium, two human fascinations: one with the boundary between life and death and the other with the mechanical animation of the inanimate, particularly the human, figure" (11). Many of Mulvey's observations on photography and death in a subsequent chapter (54–66) are based on the same passages in Barthes's *Camera Lucida* that I discuss. On how painted portraits function in movies as icons of mourning, see Susan Felleman, *Art in the Cinematic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 14–73. Early on, Felleman cites Leon Battisa Alberti from the fifteenth century: "Painting has a divine power, being not only able to make the absent seem present, as friendship is said to do, but even to make the dead seem almost alive after many centuries" (14).

17. Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (New York: Appleton, 1916).

18. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 9–16.

19. Dominique François Arago, "Report," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, Conn.: Lette's Island Books, 1980), 17.

20. *The Pencil of Nature* was the title of Talbot's book (1844–46) discussing photography as a form of auto-inscription (made by nature). His alphabet image is reproduced in Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), 147. Batchen points out that "Talbot had no one subject in mind as the principal pictorial aspiration of photography" (149).

21. See Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, 158–73.

22. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, Conn.: Lette's Island Books, 1980), 74, italics in original; for his subsequent essay, see "Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture, with a Stereoscopic Trip across the Atlantic," *Atlantic Monthly* 8 (July 1861): 13–29. Further citations cited parenthetically.

23. Holmes's friends Emerson and Hawthorne offered similar morbid insights about photographs; Hawthorne's novel *The House of the Seven Gables*, for example, can be read as an extended meditation on the relation between the mimetic and uncanny aspects of the new medium in its unsettling capacity to render the inner aspects of character, especially in death. See the critical edition of the novel edited by Robert S. Levine (New York: Norton, 2005). In an exchange of letters between Carlyle and Emerson in 1846, we find the following comment by Carlyle on Emerson's photograph: "Here is a genial, smiling,

energetic face, full of sunny strength, intelligence, integrity, good humor, but it lies imprisoned in baleful shade as of the valley of Death; seems smiling on me as if in mockery. 'Dost know me, friend? I am dead, thou seest, and forever hidden from thee.'" Reprinted in *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* ed. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 7:225. For this same year (1846), another Emerson journal entry reads: "On the sitter the effect of the Daguerrotypist is asinizing." This anticipation of Barthes can be found in the Levine edition (298).

24. Quoted in Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 180.

25. Georges Méliès offers one famous account of his first viewing of the Lumière cinématographe in December 1895: "After a few minutes, a stationary photograph showing the Place Bellecour in Lyon was projected. A little surprised, I scarcely had time to say to my neighbor: 'Is it just to have us see projections that he has brought us here? I've been doing them for ten years.' No sooner had I stopped speaking when a horse pulling a cart started to walk toward us, followed by other vehicles, then passersby—in short, the whole vitality of a street. We were open-mouthed, dumbfounded, astonished beyond words in the face of this spectacle." Quoted in Emmanuelle Toulet, *Birth of the Motion Picture* (New York: Abrams, 1995), 14–15.

26. Cited in ibid., 130. It is worth giving the original French: "C'est la vie même, c'est le mouvement pris sur le vif. . . . Lorsque ces appareils seront lèvres au public, lorsque tour pourront photographier les êtres qui leur sont chers, non plus dans leur forme immobile, mais dans leur mouvement, dans leur action, dans leurs gestes familiers, avec la parole au bout des lèvres, la mort cessera d'être absolue" (*La Poste,* December 30, 1895). For an interesting but brief reading of the first line of this passage comparing *la vie* to *le vif* (which is more accurately translated as "it is movement taken from life"), see Sean Cubitt, *The Cinema Effect* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 19. Stewart also cites this passage in yet another translation that renders *absolue* as "terminal." See *Between Film and Screen,* x. The phrase "Living Photographs" can be found in Cecil Hepworth, *Animated Photography: The ABC of the Cinematograph* (1900; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1970), 37, 73, 94, 97, and *Came the Dawn: Memoirs of a Film Pioneer* (London: Phoenix House, 1951), 29.

27. "Le Cinématographe," *Le Radical,* December 30, 1895. Thanks to Richard Abel for this citation and its translation.

28. "Le Kinetographe," *Le Monde Canadien,* April 20, 1895. Citation and translation courtesy of Richard Abel.

29. Quoted in Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 298.

30. Sterne borrows the term *bourgeois modernity* from the work of Matei Calinescu (310). At one point he does acknowledge that other media besides the phonograph had long-standing associations with death, but this insight is limited to a single paragraph (291). Sterne is absolutely brilliant at drawing important insights from the nuts-and-bolts aspects of sound reproduction technology

and practice. But a full-blown analysis of the Victorian culture of death would require him to go beyond material procedures such as food canning and corpse embalming to consider a wider set of religious beliefs and values, perhaps starting with the growing uncertainty about the permanence of the soul, which might have lead to an increasing insecurity throughout the nineteenth-century about the status of the corporeal body. For a set of important theoretical essays, see Sarah Webster Goodwin and Elizabeth Bronfen, eds. *Death and Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), especially their introduction (3–25); and Carol Christ, "Painting the Dead: Portraiture and Necrophilia in Victorian Art and Poetry," in *Death and Representation,* ed. Sarah Webster Goodwin and Elizabeth Bronfen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 133–51.

31. Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 21–58. On the telephone and death (specifically in relation to electrocution), see Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 374–76.

32. Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter,* trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 5. A bit later Kittler remarks, "The realm of the dead is as extensive as the storage and transmission capabilities of a given culture" (13). With the exception of his chapter on film, Kittler devotes relatively little attention to visual media, for two reasons, I think. First, since his baseline point of comparison for media is writing, he is mainly interested in "serial data flows" (10), rather than the transmission of information more generally (although he is inconsistent on this point). Second, the emergence of photographs near the middle of the nineteenth century threatens to disrupt his neat historical schema contrasting discourse networks in 1800 with those a full century later, around 1900.

33. Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema,* trans. and ed. Richard Crangle (Exeter, U.K.: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 40. For a wry look at the proliferation of corpses on recent television shows like *CSI,* to cite yet another medium, see Thomas Doherty, "Cultural Studies and Forensic Noir," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 50, no. 9 (October 24, 2003): 315.

34. Sterne, *The Audible Past,* 215–86.

35. Ibid., 297.

36. Stewart, *Between Film and Screen,* 321.

37. Bazin, *What Is Cinema?,* 10

38. Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 31–32.

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